

A COLLABORATIVE STUDY OF AN EMPLOYMENT
MARKETABILITY MODEL FOR THE WOMEN
OF METROPOLITAN BAPTIST CHURCH

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ABSTRACT

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To address current problems associated with unemployment among women, guided by collaborative leadership theory, an employment model for women was designed and implemented to increase the probability of women being the successful candidate when interviewing for a job. The Employment Marketability Model was measured by four key areas: spirituality, emotional readiness, reinventing one's skills, and presentation and professionalism. The methods used to determine the impact of the model were the focus group, pre and post-seminar questionnaire, and in-depth interviews. At the conclusion of the research, study participants reported a measurable increase in the number of job interviews and job acquisitions.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

An Employment Marketability Model for the Women of Metropolitan Baptist Church was not completed solely on my personal knowledge of how to begin and complete a research project. It was the combined experiences, skills, and knowledge of many who share in this outcome.

I would like to thank my professional associates Allen D. Callahan and Youlanda Gibbons who shared their professional expertise as a biblical scholar and expert in the area of research methodology, respectively. You brought clarity to my cloudiest moments.

My deepest gratitude to my context associates Kim Barnett, Jacqueline Diann Foote, Kristin Elizabeth Hicks, Sharon Hilliard, Benzena Lewis, Tanya R. Peters, Yolanda Tulley, and Ayana Watkins-Northern who said “yes” to helping with this project before knowing what responsibilities would ensue. You are phenomenal women. That’s you!

To my focus group participants Kristen Nickens, Sharon Orr Williams, Patricia Lanier, Karen Smith and Kristin Hicks, I will forever be indebted to you for coming out on a cold night in January to provide the first line of information for getting the Employment Marketability Model up and moving.

I am very thankful to all the seminar presenters, Arnette Georges, Annie Lanier, Brenda Girton Mitchell, Ayana Watkins-Northern, Youlanda Gibbons, Kim Barnett,

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Patricia Lanier, Sharon Morgan, Dawn Smith, and Sharon Thornton, thank you for consenting to have your names published as the study's participants. I am grateful for your total commitment to the project. Without it, my research might still be a work in progress.

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Thank you Henry for bringing me cookies at night and continuing to love me through this process as you have for the past forty-five years.

To my heavenly Father, for directing my steps on this journey and giving me the strength to endure it, I give you thanks.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to the memory of my mother, Delia Hardy Harrison, who by example, instilled in me a desire to be a lifelong learner.

INTRODUCTION

Collaborative leadership was a prevailing historical feature of the research component of this paper. Women entry into the workplace in America involved efforts that were planned, designed, and implemented on their behalf to train and prepare them for success in their new positions. Many of the training locations were neighborhood black churches. Historically the pastors of these churches exercised collaborative leadership in working closely with social agencies to make this possible.

Organizations that were in collaborative relationship for this research project were Metropolitan Community Development Corporation and The Garments Hem, affiliates of Metropolitan Baptist Church, and Enterprise Solutions, Inc., a multi-disciplinary consulting firm. Each participating organization had clear roles and responsibilities. All shared a common interest of easing the burden that the economic state of our country has placed on families.

Data reported by the Bureau of Labor Statistics in April 2010 indicated that the unemployment rate for women was 7.7 percent.¹ For African American women it was 13.7 percent compared to 9.0 percent for White women.² As these trends continue, government agencies, along with businesses and charitable organizations, have come forward to assist in easing the burdens of those affected by the downturn in America's economy. Also responding to the impact of the nation's economic conditions are

¹United States Department of Labor, "Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey", U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics <http://data.bls.gov/PDQ/servlet/SurveyOutputServlet> (accessed May 19, 2010).

²United States Department of Labor, "Employment Status of the Civilian Population by Race, Sex, and Age", U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (accessed May 19, 2010).

churches whose parishioners have experienced job loss and extended periods of unemployment. In order to address the problems associated with unemployment among women in Metropolitan Baptist Church, guided by collaborative leadership theory, an employment model was designed to focus on concrete strategies for women to use when job searching.

Overview of Chapters

Chapter one weaves threads of the researcher's life with those of her ministry context to give the reader a glimpse into the reason why this project was chosen. She shares childhood examples of life in the deep South, professional work related experiences, and bumps along the way in her spiritual journey as the motivation for this research study.

Chapter two focuses on related areas of inquiry that impact the marketability of women seeking employment. It concentrates on strategies that are practical and can easily be utilized by those seeking employment.

Chapter three provides a framework for considering the notion of "employment marketability" through analysis of the biblical image of the virtuous woman in the book of Proverbs and Dorcas in the book of Acts. Both had entrepreneurial skills as a seamstress and a willingness to help those in need. This chapter also presents a theological foundation which examines black, feminist and womanist theologies from the perspective of inequality, social and political injustice, and the need for economic empowerment of oppressed people.

Chapter four provides an in-depth discussion of the rationale of the methods used in designing the Employment Marketability Model. It provides a brief description of seminars that were presented in this study and explains how the seminar topics were chosen. It describes how seminar presenters were recruited, the process for selecting study participants, how survey instruments and in-depth interviews were used for the collection of data, and appropriate techniques for data analyses.

Chapter five provides a detailed discussion of the study's findings. Data collected from the focus group, pre and post seminar questionnaire and in-depth interviews identified participants' perceptions of and attitudes about their employment status. Findings in this study also gathered information on the perceived impact of the Employment Marketability Model on participants' job search.

In chapter six the reader gets a look into the heart of the researcher. It provides an overview of what the researcher considers the good points and the not so good points of the study. What would the researcher change were she to again do this study? What would she keep? What would she give way to the winds? Those answers are found in her reflections. A summary of the project is given along with a concluding statement as to how this Employment Marketability Model may be advantageously used by others.

CHAPTER ONE

MINISTRY FOCUS

Whenever one has an opportunity to visit a place of worship, whether in this country or some other part of the world, no matter what differences may be observed in these worship centers, there are common characteristics that are shared by each. Each will have a location, members, and a history. Nancy T. Ammerman et al., in the book, *Studying Congregations: A New Handbook* refers to this as “time-space-network location,” the context of the congregation.¹ The time-space-network location of this author’s project is the Metropolitan Baptist Church (Metropolitan).

Metropolitan has four locations serving as centers for Christ in the Washington, D C Metropolitan area. The permanent worship center, located at 100 Miracle Way in Largo, Maryland is nestled among thousands of trees on thirty-four scenic acres of land. While its construction awaits completion, Metropolitan’s temporary worship center is housed at First and P Streets Northwest in Washington, DC. Metropolitan Day School, located in the Northeast quadrant of Washington, DC, was founded in 1998 and enrolls students in kindergarten through third grade. The third location is the R Street Ministries located at 1210 R Street in Northwest Washington, DC. The R Street Ministries occupies 4,000 square feet of space adjacent to Metropolitan’s old church site, ensuring that the

¹Nancy Tatom Ammerman, *Studying Congregation: A New Handbook* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1998), 43.

146-year-old legacy of community ministries started by Metropolitan Baptist Church on R Street continues. The fourth location is the Metropolitan Community Development Corporation (MCDC). It is located on Harry S. Truman Drive in Largo, Maryland and owns two buildings that house office space for Metropolitan Baptist and local community businesses. Metropolitan's open door policy encourages cultural diversity and welcomes the community and visitors within its walls of worship seven days a week. "Whosoever will, let them come," is the guiding principle shared in a congregation composed of African Americans, Latinos, Caucasians, and other ethnic cultures. Members who cover the full socio-economic spectrum come to worship together in Prince George's County.

Prince George's County is reportedly one of the wealthiest counties in the nation.² In 2007 the U.S. Census Bureau estimated the average household income as \$67,989 per household.³ The Upper Marlboro area of the county has many charming rural and pastoral features such as horse and produce farms. Single-family dwellings, apartments, and town homes, however, surround the church. One could leave the church and walk to Prince George's Community College, an elementary and high school, the public library, the mass transit system, retail shops, a movie theater, and several restaurants. FedEx Field (home of the Washington Redskins) is also in close proximity to Metropolitan. But in the midst of this affluence, poverty also exists.

Throughout the county are alcoves of substandard overcrowded housing with young children living with aging grandparents on fixed incomes, or other relatives

²"The Most Affluent African-American and Best Managed County in the Country-The Prince Georges's Maryland Story," Urbandisc, http://www.urbandisc.com/affluent_black_county.html (accessed January 31, 2010).

³"State and County QuickFacts: Prince George's County, Maryland," U.S. Census Bureau, <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/24/24033.html> (accessed January 31, 2010).

already living below the poverty threshold; the mentally ill, who cannot afford treatment and medications; the homeless who roam without resources; the unemployed who cannot find a full time job making a livable wage; and those without health-care.

The researcher's project will focus on the Largo site of Metropolitan Baptist Church in Prince George's County, Maryland and its surrounding communities, including Washington, DC and Northern Virginia. Prince George's County Maryland is located in the heart of the Baltimore/Washington Corridor and has a common border with Washington, DC. Downtown Washington is only ten miles away and Baltimore is thirty-seven. As of the estimated census of 2008, there were 820,852 people, 286,610 households, and 198,047 families residing in the county. There were 308,929 housing units at an average density of 1,651.1 per square mile.⁴

There were 286,610 households out of which 35.30% had children under the age of 18 living with them, 44.00% were married couples living together, 19.60% had a female householder with no husband present, and 30.90% were non-families. Individuals made up 24.10% of all households and 4.90% had someone living alone who was 65 years of age or older. The average household size was 2.74 persons and the average family size was 3.25 persons. In the county the population was spread out with 26.80% under the age of 18, 10.40% from 18 to 24, 33.00% from 25 to 44, 22.10% from 45 to 64, and 7.70% who were 65 years of age or older. The median age was 33 years. For every 100 females there were 91.50 males. For every 100 females age 18 and over, there were 87.20 males.

⁴"State and County QuickFacts: Prince George's County, Maryland," U.S. Census Bureau, <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/24/24033.html> (accessed January 31, 2010).

The median income for a family was \$62,467. Males had a median income of \$38,904 versus \$35,718 for females. The per capita income for the county was \$23,360. About 5.30% of families and 7.70% of the population were below the poverty line, including 9.20% of those under age 18 and 6.90% of those 65 or over.

Property belonging to religious entities makes up 3,450 acres of land in the county. The county is home to over eight hundred churches, as well as a number of mosques, synagogues, and Hindu temples.⁵ Fifteen mega-churches are located throughout the county with Metropolitan being the most recent to arrive.

So Built We the Wall, 2008 Annual Report, a publication of Metropolitan Baptist Church, chronicles the 144 years of history of this religious institution, that is the ministry context of the author's project.

Metropolitan had its beginnings in a Quaker Civil War barracks in 1864. Its odyssey began with ten souls committed to the truth of the Gospel and determined to live for Christ. It was a time of great uncertainty and pain for those now-free men and women who gathered in a desolate area of Washington known as "Hell's Bottom." Led by the Rev. Henry Bailey, they dared to think that from the ashes of war and conflict, a great cathedral for Christ would rise. They were certain that God would make a way for them, and their odyssey of faith began.

History has recorded that Fourth Baptist Church initially worshiped in tents across the street from Camp Barker, where Reverend Bailey had ministered during the war years to thousands of displaced former slaves. Answering God's greater vision, they soon were transitioning to the future. In 1865, on "two good lots of land" purchased on R Street, the church began constructing a simple frame house of worship.

Like King David, Reverend Bailey did not see the completion of the vision he began, but Rev. Robert Johnson took it up as his own in 1870. With characteristic zeal, Reverend Johnson applied himself not only to completing the original meetinghouse but also constructing a larger church to accommodate the rapidly growing

⁵Ibid.

flock.

Having purchased two additional lots, the church laid the cornerstone for the new brick building in 1882. The first services were held there the next year in the basement as work continued on the main sanctuary. The sanctuary was completed in 1892, the year that Fourth Baptist took its modern name, Metropolitan.

The Rev. Moses Wilberforce DeWitt Norman, Metropolitan's third pastor beginning in 1905, oversaw the much-praised "finishing" of the new church through the addition of steam heat, electric lights and a magnificent pipe organ. During his twenty-one years of leadership, the church paid off its construction debt completely.

As with his predecessors, the Rev. Dr. Ernest Clarence Smith believed in the importance of education. During his thirty-three years as Metropolitan's fourth pastor, Dr. Smith expanded the already popular Sunday school to include an adult Sunday School and he also established the Baptist Training Union, the Children's Church and the Christian Education Institute. His preaching and leadership skills served as a magnet and membership continued to grow, once again signaling a need to expand to support the needs of the church's ministries.

Its current pastor, Reverend Dr. H. Beecher Hicks, Jr., came to Metropolitan in 1977. During his thirty-three years as pastor, the church has developed into one of the world's foremost Christian congregations. Powerful preaching, and expansive program of biblical teaching and discipleship development and an infrastructure of more than 50 ministries, including one of the finest music ministries in America today, mark his ministry. The church's various commercial and social service ventures have placed Metropolitan among the country's most productive religious and civic institutions.⁶

Christ is the head of Metropolitan. The New Testament and God's Holy Word; its

Articles of Incorporation and its Constitution and Organizational Policies govern

Metropolitan. The pastor is the Senior Servant and the congregation follows his

leadership. The Diaconate is comprised of the deacons and trustees of the church. All

trustees are deacons. These are godly men and women who are appointed, ordained and

anointed by the Senior Servant with an assignment of servant leadership.

The Council of Ministries is comprised of persons giving leadership to

⁶*So Built We the Wall*, (Washington, DC: Metropolitan Baptist Church, 2008), 3, 5.

Metropolitan's fifty-three lay ministries. The leaders meet monthly as a group to ensure that each is informed of the mission and priorities of the church, including the church calendar, pastoral concerns, and administrative issues.

Metropolitan ministries assume pivotal roles in making a difference in the Prince George's County and the Washington Metropolitan area.⁷ The ministries support local groups such as the Phyllis Wheatley YWCA, The Balm in Gilead, an organization that supports the fight against AIDS in the African American community, local schools and other organizations through generous financial contributions. The ministries also contribute food to the Capital Area Food Bank to help feed some 633,000 hungry residents in our region. They are actively engaged in homeless shelter and street ministries.

One of Metropolitan's core values is to support the education of its members. Special emphasis is given to its youth. The Christian Discipleship Council awards scholarships to graduating seniors through the Eleanor Frazier Hicks, Lena Price Smith and Mamie O. Smith scholarship funds. The Sunday School ministry has ongoing outreach programs with the Stoddard Nursing Home, Howard University Hospital and the Metropolitan Day School.

Metropolitan's prayer ministry, Pray Until Something Happens (PUSH), gathers each Monday to pray for those who are sick and shut-in or have faced a recent illness. The ministry also prays for members of the church family and friends who are serving in Iraq and others who are near and far who submit prayer requests through our web site. With the opening of 4,000 square feet of ministry outreach space at 1210 R Street,

⁷Ibid., 13.

Metropolitan's ministries continue to have an impact in the DC area.

Since being called to pastor Metropolitan in 1977, the current congregation has grown from a membership of 1500 to over 6000 under the Senior Servant, Dr. H. Beecher Hicks, Jr. As the membership grew, so did the needs of the congregation. Responding to those needs, Metropolitan has spun four affiliated not-for-profit corporations.

The Garment's Hem is a nonprofit collaborative effort of Christian medical and mental health professionals who have provided services to individuals and families in the Washington metropolitan area for 14 years. It has launched two initiatives that offer a holistic approach to physical, mental and spiritual healing. The Health and Wellness initiative focuses on obesity related illnesses such as diabetes, hypertension and strokes in the African American community. The Children with Disabilities initiative serves to support families as they seek to sustain a quality of life for children.

The Metropolitan Community Development Corporation (MCDC) was created in 2000 as a vehicle for reaching into the community in a way that is clearly different and distinguishable from the way churches traditionally serve. MCDC seeks to transfer spiritual principles into practical application by empowering change through community outreach. It offers programs in such areas as job and life skills training, education, youth development, and business development.

Founded in 1998, the Metropolitan Day School is a coeducational school that enrolls students in kindergarten through third grade. Its mission is to develop the minds, bodies and spirits of children, creating in them a passion for lifelong learning, a commitment to caring for others, and habits of healthy living. It is committed to the pursuit of excellence, integrating learning and faith so that students become academic and

spiritual leaders of the future.

Metropolitan/Delta Adult Literacy Council provides adults in the Washington community with the knowledge and skills that enable them to increase their reading levels and acquire job readiness/job advancement aptitudes. The Council's Family Literacy Program also helps low-income and educationally disadvantaged parents advance the developmental skills of their preschool children and improve their health and nutritional practices.

In 2006, Metropolitan conducted an internal census of its membership.⁸ At the time the census was taken Metropolitan's worship center was located in Washington, DC. The purpose of the census was to gather information to be entered in Metropolitan's database. Three thousand sixty-eight members completed the form. This is approximately fifty percent of the congregation. Information collected from both the Prince George's County and the Metropolitan Census Reports shows high numbers for women in each population.

Historically, Metropolitan is known for having one of the most vibrant Women's Ministries in Washington, DC. An oral history of the ministry, as presented by one of its former presidents, Reba Diggs, indicates that it was organized in 1920 as a result of President Woodrow Wilson's nationwide appeal to churches to help with the suffering and displacement caused by fires and floods in parts of California and Oklahoma.⁹ As Metropolitan prepares to transition to its new location in Prince George's County, its Women's Ministry is also preparing for the opportunity to expand its ministry and create

⁸*Metropolitan Baptist Church Census Report*, (Washington, DC: Metropolitan Baptist Church, 2006), 1, 2.

⁹Reba Diggs, *History of Metropolitan's Women's Ministry* (Washington, DC, 2002).

avenues to serve women beyond the traditional expectations.

Metropolitan's Women's Ministry was a strong supporter of a Baptist nursing home, a homeless shelter, and a hospital for permanently ill children when this researcher joined the ministry. It prided itself on its well-attended annual bazaar and the generous contribution it presented to the church on Women's Day. A monthly fellowship was held for members who paid dues, whereupon, the sick visitation, financial, and committee reports were shared, followed by a potluck luncheon. Its by-laws were lengthier than the church's constitution. Twenty years later the culture in the church had changed and so had the needs of what was now a younger congregation. It was time for change to take place within Metropolitan's Women's Ministry.

This researcher never expected that one day she would be asked to give leadership to Metropolitan's Women's Ministry. She was content to pay her dues and be listed on the roster as a member, attend meetings sporadically, contribute items to the annual bazaar, and pay her Women's Day assessment. To her amazement, in 2000 several leaders of the ministry asked the researcher if she would assume its leadership. One year earlier an immediate polite, but emphatic "no" would have been her response, but now, God was moving differently in her life and instead of "no" this she responded, "Let me pray over your request and I will get back with you." The researcher prayed, hoping to receive a message from God telling her that she was not the one He had prepared to step into this role of leadership. However, as she prayed memories of the atrocities of rape and incest which were forced upon her childhood friends rushed to the forefront, and her own exposure, by age ten, to a community where prostitution, violence, poverty, polygamy, single parenting and mental illness were considered the norm, brought sleepless nights.

Yet, the researcher suggested others whom she thought were capable and worthy of the position of president of the Women's Ministry. God had other plans. As the researcher continued to pray she finally began listening to what she believed God was directing her to do. Throughout her professional career and even in her volunteer work, He had given her the gift of understanding and helping her students and women who sought her help, work through crisis situations. Could it be that this researcher was born into a praying family with a preaching father and a teaching mother to learn "charity of heart?" Max Lucado, in his book *God Thinks You're Wonderful* stated this somewhat differently when he wrote, "He can live anywhere in the universe, and He chose your heart."¹⁰ Believing that as a Christian she was privileged to have this opportunity to be God's helper, this researcher agreed to accept the position of president of the Women's Ministry.

In the book of Matthew Jesus speaks about meeting people's needs. He said, "...Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me."¹¹ He is referring to meeting people's needs that are undetected or ignored. He is speaking about reaching out to others by visiting the sick and the imprisoned, clothing the naked, feeding the hungry, providing comfort and warmth to those on the grates, and being surrogate parents to children whose lives have been shattered through no fault of their own. With more than 3,500 women on the membership roster of Metropolitan, this researcher eagerly engaged others, who shared her vision for the ministry, to assist her in developing and executing a ministry program that would speak to the needs of the "least

¹⁰Max Lucado, *God Thinks You're Wonderful!* (New York, NY: MJF Books/ Fine Communications, 2008), 18.

¹¹Matt. 25:40 Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture references are taken from the New International Version.

of these her sisters”.¹²

In *We Have This Ministry*, a book written by Samuel DeWitt Proctor and Gardner C. Taylor, Proctor speaks of “*The Least, the Lost, and the Left Behind*,” and in doing so, he speaks of a burden that Jesus left to his followers. He writes, “He made it our burden to be mindful of the poor, the weak, and the marginal people of the world. Jesus defied the norm that stood in awe of the rich, the mighty, and the powerful, blessing the poor, the meek, and the pure in heart.”¹³ Throughout its 146 years of history, Metropolitan has ministered to many of the least, the lost and left behind, some on the streets and other public venues, some in their homes, and many in the pews. Whatever the need has been, Metropolitan has been there to help. As an arm of Metropolitan, its Women’s Ministry is there to lift up the fallen and rescue the perishing so that the broken strings of the lives of women and families in Largo, MD, Washington, DC, and Northern, VA can once again vibrate harmoniously.

Metropolitan’s Women’s Ministry is an engaging ministry that compliments the larger ministry of the church. It offers a heart that understands the challenges of life faced by women. In doing so, it encourages women to look inward and seek the plan and purpose God has for their life and live it. It propels women to act on their faith in God and look outward and exercise their acquired skills, talents, and abilities in the church, home, community and workplace. Metropolitan’s Women’s Ministry strives to support and celebrate all women and motivate them to have an excellent life in Christ.

“...For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD,

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Samuel D. Proctor and Gardner C. Taylor, *We Have This Ministry: The Heart of the Pastor's Vocation* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1996), 115.

“plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future...”¹⁴

Metropolitan welcomes and ministers to women and their families and makes resources available to those who are confronted with challenges in the areas of their physical, social, mental, and spiritual growth. Through collaborating with Metropolitan’s affiliate ministries and lay ministries, Metropolitan’s Women’s Ministry addresses issues specific to women’s wholeness. This project will focus on the women at the Largo site of Metropolitan Baptist Church, Prince George’s County, Maryland and its surrounding communities, including Washington, DC and Northern Virginia streets and other public venues, some in their homes, and many in the pews. Whatever is the need, Metropolitan is there to help.

The mission of the Metropolitan Baptist Church ministries is to bring persons into a saving and redemptive relationship as Disciples of Jesus Christ. We are a Spiritual body whose only foundation is the Word of God. We fulfill our ministry as we proclaim and teach, pray and worship, forgive and reconcile. As we live by Christ’s example, we empower others to carry out the commands of God. We seek only to be God’s servants as agents of healing and wholeness in a wounded and fragmented world.

*Metropolitan is a vibrant, multicultural congregation whose vision is as broad as the grace of God. It is a church in transition, building on the strength of its historic past while claiming the new location for ministry that God has given to it. Metropolitan ministers to families with a continuing emphasis on the social dimensions of the Gospel. It seeks to Become the Kingdom of God on earth.*¹⁵

¹⁴ Jer. 29:11

¹⁵“Ministry Support Manual,” (Washington, DC: Metropolitan Baptist Church, 2005), Tab 1, 6.

CHAPTER TWO

THE STATE OF THE ART IN THIS MINISTRY MODEL

Literature Review

The review of the literature in this chapter focuses on related areas of inquiry that impact the marketability of women seeking employment. It concentrates on strategies that are practical and driven by content. Thus, the subject areas of: mentoring, cover letter, resume writing, job searching, interviewing, and spirituality provide the framework and structure for this researcher's collection of data on women and employment marketability.

Rebound: A Proven Plan for Starting Over After Job Loss, written by Martha I. Finney, provides an appropriate context for understanding better the issues and circumstances experienced by the women who participated in the researcher's workshops on employment marketability. For example, women who rebound from unemployment tend to experience anger associated with losing their job, alienation from coworkers and friends, and financial loss. Toward this end, Finney offers suggestions on how job seekers can empower themselves and regain mastery over their lives. She advises them to step back, set goals and develop an action plan to achieve them.¹ She identifies steps that will help them stay on track and focused as they move forward in their search for employment. She advises, that the best thing unemployed persons can do is to give

¹Martha I. Finney, *Rebound: A Proven Plan for Starting over after Job Loss* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: FT Press, 2009), 102, 103.

themselves time to think about where they are emotionally; do not give up on their goals, objectives, dreams and visions; and to reach out to people they care about and trust and allow them to be their support mechanism.² In summation, Finney instructs the job seeker on what to do to get through the trauma of losing a job and coming out of it stronger, smarter and better than ever. She reminds them that they may have lost a job, but they have not lost their reason for being.³

Mentoring

A critical means of gaining and sustaining desired employment is through the supportive process of workplace mentoring. Historically, “Mentorship practice has been part of the human experience associated with learning work-related skills since the Golden Age of Greece.⁴ Engaging with a mentor as a way to learn and achieve one’s full potential is an ancient and respected practice,” says Janet Bandows Koster in the foreward to *Getting the Most out of Your Mentoring Relationship*, a book by Donna J. Deans.⁵ Dean traces the modern use of the term mentor to a book entitled *Les Aventures de Telemaque*, by the French writer Francois Fenelon, published in 1699. ... In this book, Mentor, a Greek mythological character and son of Alcumus, is asked by Odysseus as he

²Ibid., 98.

³Ibid., 124.

⁴Donna J. Dean, *Getting the Most out of Your Mentoring Relationships: A Handbook for Women in Stem*, Mentoring in Academia and Industry (Dordrecht; New York, NY: Springer, 2009), v.

⁵ Ibid.

departed for war, to be in charge of his son Telemachus. According to Dean, “This frames the source of the modern day use of the word mentor: a trusted friend, counselor, or teacher, usually a more experienced person. ... The object of the mentor’s attention is...called a mentee”⁶

Further, Dean provides perspectives on numerous topics and issues related to being mentored. She discusses mentoring relationships and what makes them work, such as: careers and transitioning into a different pathway, embracing new communication paradigms and developing priorities; moving toward career success and making the right connections, and topics of benefit to women in general. For women interested in a career in the sciences, Dean provides a list of field specific resources and organizations that focus on equity for women.

The success of the mentoring process is based on mutual respect between the mentee and the mentor. Mentoring helps the mentee clarify what the issue is and set appropriate goals. ... A mentor will ask skillful questions of the mentee that can help the mentee identify self-limiting beliefs and challenge them.⁷ Elizabeth Garone reported in *The Wall Street Journal*, “In this economy you need to take advantage of every available resource to propel your career. Finding a mentor—and preferably a network of mentors—is an easy and smart way to get started,”⁸ “Unlike a marriage, mentoring relationships do not have to be monogamous,” says Ellen Ensher, the co-author of *Power Mentoring*:

⁶Ibid., 3.

⁷Linda Miller, "Mentoring to Help Achieve Goals," *Haymarket Business Publications* (November 20, 2009): 46.

⁸Elizabeth Garone, "Careers—90 Days: Pile on Mentors in Tough Times," *Wall Street Journal (Eastern Edition)* October 6, 2009, D.6.

*How Successful Mentors and Proteges Get the Most out of Their Mentoring Relationships.*⁹

Career mentorship has become very popular in recent years as the surge in unemployment continues to affect Americans, particularly African Americans and more specifically, African American women. Those in search of employment seek out others who may be able to help them focus on the kind of job they want and market themselves accordingly. Mentors model, share and facilitate, as mentees observe, question and explore. Mentors can help the mentee identify strengths and weaknesses, provide new ways of viewing a problem or issue, suggest career alternatives, and motivate mentees to do their best. To be remembered, however, “Mentoring is about relationship and reciprocity. During the process of mentoring both, the mentor and mentee are learners and teachers,” states Youlanda Gibbons, professor of sociology at Georgetown University.¹⁰

Cover Letter, Resume Writing, and Job Searching

According to the literature, there are required and significant factors associated with identifying and obtaining desired employment. For example, the cover letter is likely to be the job seeker’s first contact with a prospective employer. *In The Quick Resume & Cover Letter Book*, the author Michael Farr recommends that one should always send a

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Youlanda Gibbons, *Mentoring: An Employment Marketability Workshop* (Largo, MD, March 20, 2010).

letter with a resume. He states, “Whether you’re mailing, faxing, or e-mailing your resume, it is important to provide a letter along with it—a cover letter (or cover message, in case of e-mailing). ... the letter should explain your situation and ask the recipient for some specific consideration or action.”¹¹ A cover letter that is well written may play a pivotal role in getting an employer to read the next part of the application, the resume. Conversely, a cover letter that is poorly written may result in both landing in the trash.

The Big Book of Jobs 2009-2010 gives detailed information on the basic elements of an effective cover letter and how to identify the skills and qualities employers value in job applicants.¹² Therefore, before writing a cover letter, the job seeker must take time to research the job market and focus in on the kind of job being pursued. Job seekers are instructed on what to include and what to omit in their cover letter. This book also advises job seekers to express their interest in a current or possible job opening and to provide the employer with an interesting, accurate summary of their skills and abilities.¹³ Many examples of cover letters are presented as models for job seekers, but the most comprehensive book of cover letter examples may well be *Adams Cover Letter Almanac*, a book that includes 600 cover letter examples.¹⁴ The letters cover all industries and positions from entry-level to senior executive. Job seekers will discover step-by-step details on how to construct a cover letter.

¹¹Michael Farr, *The Quick Resume & Cover Letter Book* (Indianapolis, IN: JIST Works, 2008), 291.

¹²The U.S. Department of Labor, *The Big Book of Jobs*, ed. Bureau of Labor Statistics McGraw-Hill & the United States Department of Labor (New York, NY: McGraw Hill, 2009-2010), 13.

¹³*Ibid.*

¹⁴*Adams Cover Letter Almanac*, 2nd ed. (Avon, MA: Adams Media, 2006).

Some entry-level, trade, or unskilled positions do not require a resume, only a completed application. Nonetheless, there are more advantages to a job seeker having a resume than not having a resume. A resume tells an employer about the job seeker's skills and serves as a starting point for an interview. Some employers file a well written resume and review it when a position becomes available. Additionally, there is the possibility that an employer will read a resume and create a position based on the skills represented therein if the job seeker is viewed as an asset to the workplace.

Although other styles of resumes may be used, Farr suggests three: the chronological resume that lists jobs held from the most recent to the least recent; the skills, or functional resume that clusters experiences under major skill areas; and combination and creative resumes that combine elements of both the chronological and skills format.¹⁵ Farr warns job seekers that resumes do not get jobs—with few exceptions, being the successful candidate for a job happens only after an interview.¹⁶

On the other hand, many cover letters and resumes are read by computers. When they arrive in the human resource department the only person who is likely to touch it is the one who feeds it through a scanner. Donald Asher in *The Overnight Resume* cautions job seekers, “Don’t get hung up on ... Internet and scannable ... resumes.”¹⁷ In *Acing the Interview* Tony Beshara found that only 2% to 6% of the people who post their resumes on the Internet find a job directly as a result of doing so.¹⁸ Although posting one’s resume

¹⁵Farr, 10, 11.

¹⁶Ibid., 13.

¹⁷ Donald Asher, *The Overnight Résumé*, 2nd ed. (Berkeley, CA: Ten Speed Press, 1999), 98.

online has become very popular when job searching, Farr, Asher, and Beshara agree that most job seekers get the job as a result of talking with people.

Furthermore, job searching online has also become very popular and competitive with traditional methods of job searching. One of the best first steps a job seeker can make is to get the word out that she or he is looking for employment. The Internet has made it easy to do so. According to Steve Graber in *The Everything Online Job Search Book*, “No matter what your interest or career, chances are there is an online discussion group going on right now that could help your quest for employment.” Graber identifies online networking as a major subject area that includes mailing lists, special interest groups, newsgroups, and online career centers to name a few.¹⁹ *The Ultimate Job Search* by Paul L. Dyer suggests that online job searching is not a very good way to find employment although one will find many jobs posted there.²⁰ Dyer does believe, however, that there are two reasons why one should include the Internet in the job search. He states, “First, you can jump on the Internet any time of the day or night. ... at times when you can not do anything else. ... The second reason you should consider including the computer ... relates to the Internet’s incredibly rapid growth.”²¹ *Job Seeker’s Online Goldmine* provides numerous resources that may be helpful to the job seeker.²²

According to Janet E. Wall, “This book provides free, interactive tools that put the career

¹⁸Tony Beshara, *Acing the Interview: How to Ask and Answer the Questions That Will Get You the Job* (New York, NY: American Management Association, 2008), 32.

¹⁹Steven Graber and Barry Littmann, *The Everything Online Job Search Book*, An Everything Series Book (Holbrook, Mass.: Adams Media Corp., 2000), xv.

²⁰Paul L. Dyer, *The Ultimate Job Search Survival Guide* (Princeton, NJ: Peterson's, 1998), 164.

²¹Ibid.

²²Janet E. Wall, *Job Seeker's Online Goldmine: A Step-by-Step Guidebook to Government and No-Cost Web Tools* (Indianapolis, IN: JIST Works, 2006), 195-202.

and job search process in the hands of the job seeker. The job seeker is able to identify careers of interest, learn how to obtain the education and training necessary to qualify for occupations, and then use the employability skills they have in order to nab the job opportunity.”²³

Interviewing

The next logical phase of the job search is the interview process. In *Acing the Interview*, Beshara successfully presents job seekers with an organized comprehensive manual on interview preparation and help with tough questions. To be successful in the interviewing process, the applicant must understand the audience with whom she or he is interviewing. As a result, In *Acing the Interview*, Beshara has placed emphasis on not just knowing how to answer the questions skillfully, but also how to put into context those answers and questions so that the applicant can not only get a job offer, but choose the right one.²⁴ He shares with his readers, “Over the last few years the context—that is, the market, the rules, the situations, etc—of being a job applicant has drastically changed. The job search market has been highly volatile, and the past few years have been no exception.”²⁵ Beshara suggests several thoughts on what today’s job seekers need to know about today’s hiring authorities and their companies. He recommends that job seekers get to know their prospective employer and focus on the need of the employer

²³ Janet E. Wall, "Job Seeker Online Goldmine", CVTips <http://www.cvtips.com/job-search/job-seeker-online-goldmine.html> (accessed May 11, 2010).

²⁴ Beshara, 3.

²⁵ Ibid.

and not their own during the interview; know the employer's generational DNA and personality style.²⁶

Beshara indicates that getting a job is a number's game and numbers of interviews are crucial to getting good job offers.²⁷ He lists persons and companies that can assist the job seeker in getting an interview. Friends, family, competitors, trade and professional associations, fraternity and sorority members, job fairs, the religious community, and recruiters are listed, along with other sources.²⁸ Susan Shelly in *Networking for Novices*, provides additional areas of networking to the list. She includes professional conferences and seminars, continuing education courses, social clubs, special interest groups and civic, community and charitable organizations.²⁹ In *Interview Strategies That Lead to Job Offers*, Marilyn Pincus, in agreeing with Beshara on getting to know the employer and company for which one is interviewing, states, "Unless you demonstrate an interest in the company and the position you're hoping to fill, you're not likely to move from being the interviewee to being invited in."³⁰ She offers practical ways of accessing information about a company. For example, she suggests Internet access, annual reports, marketing materials, industry reports, television and newspapers, and networking with employees.³¹

²⁶Ibid., 19, 20, 25.

²⁷Ibid., 27.

²⁸Ibid., 27-29, 35.

²⁹Susan Shelly, *Networking for Novices*, 1st ed., Basics Made Easy (New York: Learning Express, 1998), 128-131.

³⁰Marilyn Pincus, *Interview Strategies That Lead to Job Offers* (Hauppauge, NY: Barron's, 1999), 20.

³¹Ibid., 24-29.

Providing additional information as a way of preparing the job seeker for an interview, Burton Jay Nadler introduces the job seeker to typical interviewer styles in *The Everything Cover Letter Book*. He suggests there is the traditional interviewer who begins questions with “who, what, why, and how;” the behavioral interviewer who begins questions with “describe, give, and share;” and the conversational interviewer who has already learned about the job seeker from the resume and uses the interview to get to know the job seeker conversationally.³² Nadler states, “Being aware of these styles and recognizing them during the interview will help you [the job seeker] diminish anxieties and remain confident.”³³

Spirituality

An essential way of remaining confident and addressing unemployment anxieties is through the exploration and development of one’s spirituality and connectedness to God. *Losing Your Job—Reclaiming Your Soul*, written by Mary Lynn Pulley, is a narrative account of resilience, renewal, and hope of people who lost their jobs. Pulley presents a model of career buoyancy that tells the story of how losing a job can emotionally and spiritually impact individuals and bring them full circle from brokenness to wholeness. Pulley tells how people, who were successful professionals, restructured their lives in ways that became more fulfilling and meaningful to them.³⁴ Interviewees

³²Burton Jay Nadler and Steven Graber, *The Everything Cover Letter Book: Winning Cover Letters for Everybody from Student to Executive*, 2nd ed., An Everything Series Book (Avon, MA: Adams Media, 2005), 52.

³³*Ibid.*, 51.

explain how the structure of their lives collapsed, along with its comfort and security, and how they picked up the pieces and structured them differently.³⁵ According to Pulley, “All talked about tapping into something bigger than themselves that helped them through their transition process and put their job loss in perspective.³⁶ They interpreted their experience as part of a bigger plan or a bigger picture, and it provided solace because it laced the experience with meaning. ... Their interpretations combine faith, hope, and imagination.”³⁷

Many of the people Pulley interviewed indicated that their job loss had the effect of strengthening their spiritual faith and bringing it off the back burner.³⁸ When asked about how they accessed spirituality, Pulley received varied responses. For example, Carol, who left a hotel corporation replied, “Solitude, meditation, friends, or thinking of a loving universe with creative solutions, I don’t go to church,” while Ron responded, “I don’t know how to prove that spirituality works. I can tie things I encounter in business to the Bible; ... I just think it’s very personal and individual.”³⁹ While writing *Losing Your Job—Reclaiming your Soul*, Pulley noticed that among the people she interviewed,

³⁴ Mary Lynn Pulley, *Losing Your Job—Reclaiming Your Soul: Stories of Resilience, Renewal, and Hope*, 1st ed., The Jossey-Bass Business & Management Series (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1997), 2.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid., 148.

³⁸ Ibid., 150.

³⁹ Ibid.

their faith was active and in the world. Faith was not a set of religious beliefs they had; it was something they did.⁴⁰

Throughout Pulley's book are examples of spirituality. There are testimonies of spirituality becoming more a part of some lives than it was before their job loss. Many who were interviewed experienced their faith and spirituality as something that is present in their daily life. Pulley shares these words with her readers, "Losing a job, or even feeling a sense of meaningless or aridity in your daily life, offers the possibility for getting in touch with your soul's calling. ... Our soul speaks a symbolic language expressed largely through images rather than words. ... Reclaiming our soul involves finding and fulfilling our life's purpose. ... Reclaim your soul by remembering your life's purpose and fulfilling its promise."⁴¹

To conclude, the majority of career development literature on seeking and securing desired employment favors an increased understanding of the role of workplace mentoring, the importance of the cover letter, resume writing and job searching, impressive interviewing skills and the benefits of spirituality. Although the literature emphasizes and promotes practical examples of these components of the job search, both employers and prospective employees agree that they are vital to not only gaining entry into the workplace but also in obtaining desired career goals and ambitions. When taken together, mentoring, the cover letter, resume writing and job searching, interviewing and spirituality, offer a comprehensive approach to successfully navigating the work environment and ultimately finding one's niche within it. Therefore, these components,

⁴⁰Ibid., 155.

⁴¹Ibid., 214, 215, 221.

as described in the literature, have shaped and guided the development and implementation of the Employment Marketability Model employed in this research.

CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

Imagine a future based on the continuation of current trends in this country, trends of unemployment, home foreclosures, homelessness, and hunger. Observers of American history have seen working Americans robbed of their savings and of any economic future due to financial swindling and artificially accelerated concentration of wealth and corporate power.¹ As a result of greed, America finds herself in the midst of social and economic challenges not seen in recent history. As these trends continue, government agencies, along with businesses and charitable organizations, have come forward to assist in easing the burdens of those affected by the downturn in America's economy. Also responding to the impact of the nation's economic conditions are the churches, many of which have developed new ministries, both in-reach and outreach, to ease the economic burdens of their congregants and community.

The collaborative leadership approach will guide this research project which is designed and implemented to create and provide workshops proposed to train women in developing and enhancing skills to increase their employment marketability when going on job interviews. Organizations that are in collaborative relationship for this research project are Metropolitan Community Development Corporation and The Garments Hem, affiliates of Metropolitan Baptist Church, and Enterprise Solutions, Inc., a multi-

¹Manuel Garcia, Jr., "How Will the Iraq War Affect Americans?," Swans <http://www.swans.com/library/art10/iraq/Garcia.html> (accessed August 15, 2009).

disciplinary consulting firm. Each participating organization has clear roles and responsibilities. Each organization understands that its relationship, "... goes beyond communication, cooperation, and coordination. ... It is a mutually beneficial relationship between two or more parties to achieve common goals by sharing responsibility, authority, and accountability for achieving results. ... The purpose of collaboration is to create a shared vision and joint strategies to address concerns that go beyond the purview of any particular party."² Beginning with the design of the project, through its conclusion, participating organizations will work as peers, as this will increase the viability and credibility of the goals of the research.

Historical

The work of women has a rich history. This is particularly true of African American women in the United States. Little did the women who were among the twenty Negro indentured servants that were left at Jamestown, Virginia in 1619 know that by 1640 Negroes would be the beginning of the involuntary perpetual servitude of Negroes called slavery.³ In most cases, the work of the indentured servant would be household or agricultural unskilled labor.⁴ There was also a great demand for skilled craftsmen. If an indentured servant had a skill that was in demand, like weaving, blacksmithing or

²"Collaborative Leadership: Success Stories," Federal-Aid Program Administration <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/programadmin/mega/collaborative01.cfm> (accessed August 14, 2009).

³Clifton J. Allen, *The Broadman Bible Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1971); John Hope Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom; a History of American Negroes*, 1st ed. (New York, NY: A.A. Knopf, 1947), 71.

⁴Deanna Barker, "Indentured Servitude in Colonial America" http://www.geocities.com/nai_cilh/servitude.html (accessed July 9, 2009).

carpentry, the chance of negotiating a shorter contract was quite good.⁵ In theory, the person was only selling his or her labor. In practice, however, indentured servants were basically slaves.

It can be said that indentured servants unknowingly sold themselves into slavery, unlike those who were put on ships against their will for the transatlantic trip to America to intentionally be sold into slavery. *There is a River*, a literary source by Vincent Harding, provides a descriptive narrative of the work skills that African slaves, who survived the Middle Passage, deposited in a foreign soil on which they had never before set foot.

Imprisoned now in the heart of the earth they had known so well were miners familiar with the long African traditions of iron, gold, and diamond mining. Blacksmiths, their companion artisans, were also captives. Weavers and potters; workers in bronze, copper, and gold; ... herders, perhaps captured while pursuing their lonely, roaming occupations, and fisherman and fisherwomen...⁶

Turning attention to women specifically, history suggests that the jobs women performed in slavery were numerous. Almost every act they performed could be considered labor over which they had no control. Women worked in the field plowing, hoeing and picking cotton; they harvested sugarcane, performed roadwork and fed the farm animals; they split rails, managed the slaveholder's household and served as personal attendants.⁷

Leslie A. Schwalm notes that as freedwomen, ex-slaves were adamant about what

⁵Ibid.

⁶Vincent Harding, *There Is a River: The Black Struggle for Freedom in America*, 1st Vintage Books ed. (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1983), 4,5.

⁷Sharon Harley and Black Women and Work Collective, *Sister Circle: Black Women and Work* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2002), 1.

freedom meant to them and insisted on changes in the work they performed for white employers and in their own homes, rejecting the most unpleasant or demeaning tasks.⁸ On the other hand, historian Deborah Gray White takes a dimmer view on the attitude of freedwomen and their work and characterizes them in much the same role as when they were slaves. She describes them as continuing to do the laundry, performing midwifery responsibilities, sewing, growing produce and raising chickens.⁹ She suggests that women with children were not welcomed domestic workers and in some cases were treated with hostility because their employer resented the attention their young children demanded, since they were not willing to leave them at home and brought them to work.¹⁰ Clearly, freedwomen took their role as mother very seriously.

As slaves, in addition to caring for their own children, many mothers served as surrogate mothers to Master's children, often becoming impregnated by him, or their given husband at the time, so that the birth of their child coincided with the birth of Master's.¹¹ The jobs women performed after they were free were by no means ideal based on today's standards. One might say they were astute workers who did not define themselves by the work they did; for they knew a better day was coming, and that for now, their goal was to contribute to the family's financial resources to make life a little better for their children and for generations to come.

⁸Leslie A. Schwalm, "A Hard Fight for We: Women's Transition from Slavery to Freedom in South Carolina," University of Illinois Press <http://www.h-net.org/review/hrev-a0b1g9-aa> (accessed July 10, 2009).

⁹Deborah G. White, *Ar'n't I a Woman?: Female Slaves in the Plantation South*, Rev. ed. (New York, NY: W.W. Norton, 1999), 181.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Ritter Steele, interview by author, Selma, AL, 1950s.

In 1870, less than 500,000 of the nation's 5,000,000 African Americans lived outside the Southern part of the United States; however, this changed significantly between 1916 and 1930 with the migration of nearly 1,000,000 African American men and women to the North.¹² H. Beecher Hicks states in his book *My Soul's Been Anchored*, "During this period, many blacks moved from the plantations and tenant farms of the South to the overcrowded tenement jungles of Chicago, Detroit, Cleveland, and the more northern cities beyond."¹³ According to Allen Dwight Callahan in his authorship of *The Talking Book*, "This mass migration quickly became known as "exodus fever," and soon the greatest demographic shift in American history was being seen and explained in the imagery of Exodus."¹⁴ What caused so many African Americans to move during this period? A report prepared under the direction of The Committee on House Administration of the U.S. House of Representatives *Black Americans in Congress, 1870-2007* states, "During this era [Jim Crow] African Americans experienced unique suffering and deprivation. Beginning in the last quarter of the 19th century, blacks—the vast majority of whom still lived in the South—endured a system of racial segregation that circumscribed their political, economic, and social status."¹⁵ However, when the question, "Why did you leave the South and migrate to the North?" was asked of some eighty to ninety years of age African American women by this researcher, most respond,

¹²Scott Scheuerell, "The Great Migration: Based Learning Approach and the Internet," *Social Studies Research and Practice* 3, no. 1 (Spring 2008): 68.

¹³H. Beecher Hicks, *My Soul's Been Anchored: A Preacher's Heritage in the Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1998), 39.

¹⁴Allen Dwight Callahan, *The Talking Book: African Americans and the Bible* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006), 142.

¹⁵House Committee on House Administration United States Congress and House. Office of History and Preservation, *Black Americans in Congress, 1870-2007*2008. 154.

“It was the oppressive economy in the South, and the promise of a greater future in the north that motivated me to join in on the Great Migration to the North.” In the earlier years most who migrated were from rural areas and had little education; they arrived with only farm skills and without a trade.¹⁶

Census counts in the northern cities during the migration period showed that a greater number of women than men were making the journey from the South¹⁷ Even if the male population was undercounted, as often happened, still, a large number of women searched for a new life north of the Mason-Dixon line.¹⁸ “Negro women are leaving the kitchen and laundry for the workshop and factory,” wrote William Ashby, executive director of the New Jersey Welfare League, at the peak of the migration.¹⁹

As America entered the Industrial Revolution, Manufactures who were concentrated in the North but included some southern cities, began to experience labor shortages and new employment opportunities became available.²⁰ Manufacturers were willing to pay wages much higher than African Americans earned in the South working on farms.²¹ In 1918 a Bureau of Labor Statistics report noted that in 150 plants in New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Illinois, Michigan, Indiana, Virginia, West Virginia and North Carolina, no less than 40 percent of the 28,550 workers were African American women.

¹⁶Scheuerell: 70.

¹⁷Paula Giddings, *When and Where I Enter: The Impact of Black Women on Race and Sex in America* (New York, NY: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1984), 142.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Scheuerell.

²¹Ibid.

... A 1920 census showed that of all women employed in manufacturing and mechanical industry, 104,983 were African American. ... This figure represented an increase of 100 percent for African American Women, as compared to an increase of less than 1 percent of all women employed.²² It seems that in this time of our country's need for workers, African American women were welcomed as workers in many areas.

In addition, it is important to note that at the time African Americans began the Great Migration, America was involved in World War I. As men left their jobs to serve in the war, women replaced them by filling jobs that were created as a result of the war.²³ For the first time in American history, industrial jobs were opened to African American women, many of them working on assembly lines making war products such as ammunitions, gas masks, airplane wings and an assortment of items.²⁴ Assuredly, these jobs gave more personal freedom to African American women than when they worked in domestic service because of scheduled or fixed hours. Writing of black women working in Harlem, journalist Elise McDougald noted that they were finally "free from the cruder handicaps of primitive household hardships and the grosser forms of sex and race subjugation."²⁵ Even with this good news for African American women, some faced antagonism in the industrial sector and many were excluded from clerical and retail work in the white community.²⁶ In many instances white women refused to work

²²Giddings, 143.

²³Tae H. Kim, "Strike: Seattle General Strike Project"
<http://depts.washington.edu/labhist/strike/kim.shtml> (accessed July 11, 2009).

²⁴Carl E. Van Horn and Herbert A. Schaffner, *Work in America: An Encyclopedia of History, Policy, and Society* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2003), 5.

²⁵Giddings.

side by side with African American women, and the latter usually had to perform the worst jobs, under segregated and dirty conditions.²⁷

In the United States, there were before the war, over 8,000,000 women in paid occupations.²⁸ After the war began, not only did their numbers increase in common lines of work, but as one newspaper stated:

There has been a sudden influx of women into such unusual occupations as bank clerks, ticket sellers, elevator operator, chauffeur, street car conductor, railroad trackwalker, section hand, locomotive wiper and oiler, locomotive dispatcher, block operator, draw bridge attendant, and employment in machine shops, steel mills, powder and ammunition factories, airplane works, boot blacking and farming.²⁹

It is, therefore, logical to conclude that with so many women going to work outside the home, more domestic jobs were created within the home, thus more jobs for African American women and foreigners.³⁰ For example, African American women were hired as live-in domestics rather than day workers only when white women, the previous live-ins, found work in the factories.³¹ However, not all African American women who left the South during the Great Migration left to take jobs in factories or work as domestics, or laborers. Some women, black and white alike, left to take jobs in government and contribute their service to the war effort. World War I presented the opportunity for many women to earn their first decent salaries. Indeed, it was a great

²⁶Van Horn and Schaffner.

²⁷Giddings, 144.

²⁸Kim.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Van Horn and Schaffner, 488.

³¹Giddings, 143.

boost to women making their mark in the workplace.

As World War I came to an end in 1918, the foothold that African American women had carved out for themselves in the workplace began to erode. ... With the demobilization of more than 4,000,000 soldiers, with immigrants beginning to look to America again, with the slowdown of industry, competition and Negrophobia were again on the march... In the contest for jobs, African Americans were inevitable losers and the impact on African American women was immediately felt.³² African American women at every level of the labor force dropped a few notches, and those on the bottom were forced out.³³

African American women in the trades and professions also had their problems and were dependent on finding work in African American owned businesses.³⁴ There was one washerwoman, turned entrepreneur, of particular note who established her private workplace and employed other African American women to help in her business. Madam C. J. Walker invented a method of softening and smoothing uniquely textured hair.³⁵ Walker built a fortune in the early 1900s with her invention of the straighten comb and marketing of hair care and beauty products to African American women.³⁶ She is reputed to be the first black female millionaire in America, as well as a tycoon and

³²Ibid., 145.

³³Ibid.

³⁴Ibid., 146.

³⁵Della A. Yannuzzi, *Madam C.J. Walker: Self-Made Businesswoman*, African American Biographies (Berkeley Heights, NJ: Enslow Publishers, 2000), 25-33.

³⁶Ibid.

philanthropist.³⁷

Almost overnight the United States was thrust into World War II when Japan attacked Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. With the men off to war again, women were needed to fill their positions. Working was not new to women. Women had always worked, especially African American women.³⁸ America was just beginning to recover from the Great Depression of the 1930s and women in general were reluctant to go to work because they saw it as taking jobs from unemployed men.³⁹ As a result, the government launched a propaganda campaign to sell the importance of the war effort and to lure women into working, a campaign that promoted the fictional character of “Rosie the Riveter” a loyal, efficient, and patriotic woman.⁴⁰ Hearing the clairvoyant voice of the government, as an answer to the Rosie the Riveter campaign, Mary McLeod Bethune, an African American educator and founder of the National Council of Negro Women (NCNW), is remembered by Dorothy Irene Height, immediate successor to Bethune at NCNW, for the role Bethune played in instituting short-term training courses to prepare black women with skills necessary for going into the work place. Height stated:

At this time of need in America’s history, training schools like Daytona Normal and Industrial School [now Bethune-Cookman College], concentrated on helping women adjust to their new job through a program called. “Hold Your Job.”⁴¹

³⁷ Charles Collins and David Cohen, *The African Americans* (New York, NY: Viking Studio Books, 1993), 92.

³⁸ “Rosie the Riveter: Women Working During World War II”, <http://www.nps.gov/pwro/collection/website/rosie.htm> (accessed July 12, 2009).

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Miriam Frank, Marilyn Ziebarth, and Connie Field, *The Life and Times of Rosie the Riveter: The Story of Three Million Working Women During World War II*, Educator's ed. (Emeryville, CA: Clarity Educational Productions, 1982).

Through its clinics, Hold Your Job, promoted black women's industrial employment through collective planning, organization, and action while simultaneously trying to change employer's attitudes about black women workers.⁴² The Hold Your Job program also endorsed union membership and supported organized labor in free collective bargaining as a way of securing wartime employment gains.⁴³ This was a time of prosperity for women; for throughout the country their wages, on the average, rose 1,000 percent.⁴⁴

Although Hold Your Job was a boost to African American women being employed, the employment wave withered to a trickle when it came to African American workers in general and African American women in particular.⁴⁵ ... There were 5,000,000 unemployed whites to be absorbed into the economy before African Americans would even get a nod.⁴⁶ After A. Phillip Randolph, organizer of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, threatened to march on Washington with no fewer than 100,000, to redress discrimination in the defense industries, African American men and women were slowly employed into those industries.⁴⁷ There was also a dramatic increase in the number of African American women in semiprofessional occupations during this time frame as well, as their number of craftswomen, forewomen, and factory

⁴¹Dorothy Irene Height, interview by author, Washington, DC, May 10, 2009.

⁴²Van Horn and Schaffner, 6.

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴Frank, Ziebarth, and Field, 52.

⁴⁵Giddings, 235.

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷Ibid., 237.

operatives almost quadrupled.⁴⁸

World War I was a turning point for women in the workplace, however, both World War I and World War II gave African American women a chance to prove that they could do more than bring up children and navigate through domestic chores in their homes and those of their employers. Before World War I, women had no socioeconomic power, but by the end of World War II they had earned the right to take on as much responsibility as men.⁴⁹ The advancement in the development of women's work for African American and white women was strengthened by the necessity of millions of men going off to war and being removed from America's industry.

World War II not only drew women into industry in massive numbers, but it also brought them into the organized labor movement with the support of women like Jane Addams, Mary McDowell, Lillian Wald, Mary McLeod Bethune, and Eleanor Roosevelt.⁵⁰ The struggles of women workers during and after World War II were a crucial historical episode of the "first wave" of American feminism, which was held in abeyance after the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920 that gave women full voting rights.⁵¹ This was 144 years after men were granted this "unalienable" right. Ida B. Wells, an African American journalist, public speaker and women's rights advocate and founder of the Alpha Suffrage Club, along with Margaret Murray Washington and Mary Church Terrell, founders of the National Association of Colored

⁴⁸Ibid., 238.

⁴⁹Kim.

⁵⁰Jone Johnson Lewis, "Women's Trade Union League"
<http://womenshistory.about.com/od/worklaborunions/a/wtul.htm> (accessed April 6, 2010).

⁵¹Vera Taylor, "Social Movement Continuity: The Women's Movement in Abeyance," *American Sociological Review* 54, no. 5 (October 1989): 761.

Women are to be placed along side Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony in their unrelenting struggle to win full voting rights for women in America. With this achievement, women had a legal voice in matters that affected them, especially in issues pertaining to human equality, which included the workplace.

Women and Workplace Legislation

The “second wave” of the women’s movement occurred in the 1960s and 1970s.⁵² At this time in history women earned approximately sixty cents for every dollar earned by men who performed the same duties, however, mainly due to a women’s movement that started twenty years earlier, in an effort to end gender-based discrimination in labor wages, Congress enacted the Equal Pay Act of 1963.⁵³ Interestingly, the first bill signed by President Barrack Obama, after he took the oath of office as the first African American president of the United States, was the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Restoration Act.

In the same year that the Equal Pay Act was passed, Betty Friedan’s bestseller, *The Feminine Mystique*, detailed the “problem that has no name” and laid out the groundwork for the modern feminist movement.⁵⁴ In 1964 Title VII of the Civil Rights Act barred employment discrimination by private employers, and unions based on race, color, religion or sex.⁵⁵ In 1966 in response to the Equal Employment Opportunity

⁵²Jennifer Friedlin, "Second and Third Wave Feminists Clash over the Future", Women's News <http://www.womensenews.org/article.cfm/dyn/aid/920/context/cover> (accessed September 4, 2009).

⁵³" The Path of the Women's Rights Movement", <http://www.ibiblio.org/prism/mar98/path.html> (accessed July 22, 2009).

⁵⁴Ibid.

⁵⁵Van Horn and Schaffner, 7.

Commission's (EEOC) inaction on employment discrimination complaints, twenty-eight professional women, including Friedan, founded the National Organization for Women (NOW) to function as a civil rights organization for women with its purpose being "to take action to bring American women into full participation in the mainstream of American society now."⁵⁶

Women's Liberation Movement, an umbrella term used for organized activities on behalf of women's rights and interests, reached its peak in the early 1970s when journalist Gloria Steinem founded *Ms.*, a magazine dedicated to feminist issues.⁵⁷ Although some defined the Women's Liberation Movement as white and middle class, working class women and African American women were principal founders of this movement as well. Strong black feminists such as Cellestine Ware, author of *Woman Power: The Movement for Women's Liberation*; Florynce Kennedy, who in 1971 founded the Feminist Party that nominated Shirley Chisholm (who began her career in early childhood education, and later became the first African American female elected to the United States Congress) for president of the United States; and the founders of Mothers Alone Working, all were pivotal in the formation of feminist theories.⁵⁸

In addition, World Wars I and II and the passage of the Women's Suffrage Amendment catapulted the way women would be looked at forever. They would continue on a path to gaining human equality in America. While the Civil Rights Movement was exposing racial prejudices in our country, injustices and inequalities were simultaneously

⁵⁶"The Women's Movement," <http://countrystudies.us/united-states/history-131.htm> (accessed July 22, 2009).

⁵⁷Van Horn and Schaffner, 550.

⁵⁸"Women's Liberation Movement," http://www.glbtc.com/social-sciences/womens_liberation_movement.2.html (accessed July 23, 2009).

being exposed as by-products. “Affirmative action,” a federally mandated process intended to ensure that access to employment and promotions is not restricted due to race, religion, gender, or national origin was one way of moving toward equality.⁵⁹

“Affirmative action is not the most important issue for black progress in America, but it is part of a redistributive chain that must be strengthened if we are to confront and eliminate black poverty,” so states Cornel West in *Race Matters*.⁶⁰ This was a positive step taken to increase the representation of women and minorities in areas of employment, education, and business from which they had been historically excluded.

Many would agree that perhaps the most significant workplace legislation impacting working mothers is the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) of 1993. FMLA allows eligible workers to take unpaid leave from work when they or someone in their family needs medical care. With the number of dual-earner families and working mothers, FMLA provides the opportunity for workers to care for their family medical needs without fear of losing their job. Interesting though, many who are eligible to take the leave chose not to, indicating a need to maintain the level of income earned from both workers.⁶¹

Despite legal and social movements to improve access to the workplace, a greater number of African American women work than do white women.⁶² African American Women work more years in their lifetime than do white women; their unemployment rate

⁵⁹Van Horn and Schaffner, 1.

⁶⁰Cornel West, *Race Matters* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1993), 65.

⁶¹Van Horn and Schaffner, 198.

⁶²*Ibid.*, 4.

is higher than that of white women; and they earn less than white women.⁶³ Van Horn

continues by stating:

Although the gap in wages and occupations between black and white women workers has narrowed considerably, black women continue to rank lowest in the occupational hierarchy. The number of poorly paid service sector positions held by black women is still high. The vast majority of African American women workers have transitioned from servitude to service work in the health care, fast food, and hotel industries. Rather than poorly paid domestic workers, they now constitute a large percentage of nurses' aids, counter workers, and chambermaids.⁶⁴

Bette Woody, for example, in *Black Women in the Workplace* tends to agree that a gap does exist and argues that the gap between black and white women is greatest in areas of work where wages are low and where women have historically provided the principal labor force, areas such as nondurable manufacturing and retail trade; adding that the smallest gap exists in those firms and industries where women workers had the lowest presence, or were employed in the newest fields of work.⁶⁵ Generally, she supports the theory put forth by Van Horn.

Church Programs that Target Unemployment

Since emancipation, as a practical matter, the importance of work for blacks has found its way "to church": "The African American Church," writes H. Beecher Hicks, Jr., "must take the lead in addressing the socioeconomic needs of its fellowship."⁶⁶ In the

⁶³Ibid.

⁶⁴Ibid., 7.

⁶⁵Bette Woody, *Black Women in the Workplace: Impacts of Structural Change in the Economy*, Contributions in Women's Studies (New York, NY: Greenwood Press, 1992), 102.

⁶⁶H. Beecher Hicks, *A Strange Path to Power* (Chicago, IL: Urban Ministries, Inc., 1998), 57.

early days of the Civil Rights Movement, Leon Sullivan, pastor of Zion Baptist Church in North Philadelphia, could see from his pulpit the needs of his church fellowship and the community. Thousands of African American women and men in Philadelphia were unemployed, yet thousands of jobs remained vacant.⁶⁷ It was a covenant between ministers and their congregations in Philadelphia to act on behalf of the unemployed that Sullivan sought when he organized and gave leadership to a successful boycott against businesses that were not hiring blacks.⁶⁸ Howard Thurman in his book *Meditations for Apostles of Sensitiveness* said, "One of the Great Gifts of God to man is the sense of concern that one individual may develop for another."⁶⁹ The concern that Sullivan and others developed for the unemployed in Philadelphia resulted in over 4,000 unemployed African Americans being hired.⁷⁰ Although the boycott happened years before Lisa M. Hess wrote her book *Artisanal Theology*, her poignant observation, "Religious leadership formation occurs in covenant between local congregations..." was as true then as it is today as witnessed by the success of the boycott.⁷¹

Much like Sullivan, Floyd Flake, pastor of the 23,000 member Greater Allen African Methodist Episcopal Cathedral in New York City states, "I am a pastor to the

⁶⁷ "Biography of Leon H. Sullivan," Leon H. Sullivan Foundation <http://www.thesullivanfoundation.org/foundation/rev/> (accessed August 4, 2009).

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Howard Thurman, *Meditations for Apostles of Sensitiveness* (California: Eucalyptus Press, 1948), 8.

⁷⁰ "Biography of Leon H. Sullivan".

⁷¹ Lisa M. Hess, *Artisanal Theology* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2009), 21.

community. I am about religion and economics. Immediately after I became the pastor at Allen I saw that the needs of my congregation were education, housing, and jobs.”⁷²

As a result, Flake and his congregation have entities valued in excess of \$150 million dollars. They build and lease to businesses that provide services and jobs to teenagers, and men and women in the community.⁷³

Moreover, Kirbyjon Caldwell, senior pastor of the 14,000 member Windsor Village United Methodist Church in Houston, Texas and author of the best selling book *Entrepreneurial Faith and the Gospel of Good Success*, purchased a former K-mart in one of the most blighted predominantly African American neighborhoods in Houston and renovated it into the Power Center. The mission of the Power Center is to create jobs in the low-income neighborhood and to teach members of the neighborhood, men and women, how to create wealth.⁷⁴

Under the leadership of senior pastor Anthony G. Maclin the Sanctuary at Kingdom Square (formally Glendale Baptist Church) purchased a shopping center and relocated its worship center to the new location, began new businesses that employed its members, while some members themselves became business owners. This innovative ministry is located in Capitol Heights, Maryland a largely African American community. While these previously mentioned churches have not designed their economic

⁷²Floyd H. Flake, 2008. Religion and Politics and Where They Intersect. Lecture, United Theological Seminary, Dayton, OH. October 7.

⁷³Ibid.

⁷⁴Kirbyjon Caldwell, Walt Kallestad, and Paul Sorensen, *Entrepreneurial Faith: Launching Bold Initiatives to Expand God's Kingdom*, 1st ed. (Colorado Springs, CO: WaterBrook Press, 2004).

development plans specifically around women, African American women are among business owners and employees in these complexes.

It is obvious that churches have chosen varied methods to combat the escalating problem of unemployment that plagues our nation. For the first time, some churches have become intentional about developing ministries that speak specifically to assisting the unemployed in finding work. To help parishioners cope with the stress and trauma associated with the loss of a job or a new job search, two affiliates of Metropolitan Baptist Church (Metropolitan); Metropolitan Community Development Corporation (MCDC) and The Garment's Hem currently offer assistance to job seekers through a workforce initiative, Employment Services Program (ESP). ESP provides individuals with weekly access to job listings and opportunities throughout the Washington, DC Metropolitan area. Additionally, it provides job coaching and career exploration to job seekers. Women have been very responsive to the services offered through this initiative. The Garment's Hem, staffed with medical and mental health professionals, assist the unemployed with handling stress that may be associated with their employment issues.

To further assist Metropolitan with unemployment among its women, a series of career development workshops will be designed and implemented through Metropolitan's Christian discipleship Institute, the Christian education component of the church. The goal of the workshops is to increase the probability of women being successful candidates when interviewing for a job. Further, the workshops will encourage women to view their valley of unemployment as an opportunity to reach the peak of their potential professionally and spiritually as they pursue a career and maintain successful employment.

Old Testament

At the end of the book of Proverbs hangs a mental portrait of a woman framed in an acrostic poem that suggests Proverbs 31:10-31 provides the “A-to-Z’s” of the perfect woman.⁷⁵ This perfect woman is referred to as the “virtuous woman.” Throughout this chapter there are lessons of wisdom and lessons that are practical in nature and may be instructive for women in every aspect of life. It seems that the real contribution of this scripture, however, is to demonstrate that women played an important social and economic role in the Old Testament. This is supported by verses 16 and 24, verses that have been chosen as the framework for a research project on The Employment Marketability of Women.

She considers a field and buys it;
Out of her earnings she plants a vineyard
She makes linen garments and sells them,
and supplies the merchants with sashes.⁷⁶

These poetic words portray the virtuous woman as a wise entrepreneur, a real estate agent and fashion designer. Additionally, she is an inspirational motivator for women who seek balance between their career, family, civic responsibilities, and social engagements, while at the same time maintaining a godly life.

Warren W. Wiersbe states, “People with wisdom have the skill to face life honestly and courageously, and to manage it successfully so that God’s purposes are

⁷⁵Christine Roy Yoder, “The Woman of Substance: A Socioeconomic Reading of Proverbs 31: 10-31,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 122, no. 3 (Fall 2003): 427.

⁷⁶Prov. 31:16, 24 Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture references are taken from the New International Version.

fulfilled in their lives.”⁷⁷ The virtuous woman is an example of how today’s women can be successful in their job and business ventures and make a living while at the same time make a satisfying life for themselves when divine principles are incorporated.

We see the advice of yet another woman in Proverbs 31:1-9. In these verses we are introduced to a woman, more likely the mother of Solomon, who also offers sage advice on womanhood.⁷⁸ In these verses there is to be gleaned tremendous applicable information that instructs women and wives. According to this mother, a virtuous woman is indeed rare and precious, someone to be greatly treasured as a valuable gift from God.⁷⁹

It is important to note that this wise mother teaches that there are different types of women in the world. She suggests that all women are not virtuous. Some will be sinful companions; some will be given to strong drink; and yet others will disobey the Word of God.⁸⁰ Some scholars believe this lengthy counsel on choosing a virtuous woman is a reference to King Solomon’s mother Bathsheba.⁸¹ Temper Longman takes a different stance. He claims that there is no evidence, biblical or otherwise, as to the identity of the king who is the subject of verses 1-9.⁸² Nonetheless, he does agree that in the acrostic

⁷⁷Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary: The Complete Old Testament in One Volume*, 2nd ed. (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2007), 1054.

⁷⁸Larry Richards, "The Bible Reader's Companion," (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1991). Logos Research Systems, 1996. <http://www.logos.com/search?q=L.O.+Richards> (accesses April 19, 2009).

⁷⁹*People's Bible Commentary*, ed. Roland Cap Ehlke, Proverbs (Milwaukee, WI: Northwestern Publishing House, 2005), 212,213.

⁸⁰Allen, 97.

⁸¹Richards. Logos Research Systems, 1996. <http://www.logos.com/search?q=L.O.+Richards> (accessed April 19, 2009).

poem in verses 10-31 the mother is directing her teaching to her son the king.⁸³ Longman further states:

In Hebrew, as opposed to other ancient Near Eastern proverbs, mothers are mentioned as those engaged in the instruction of their children. However this is the only place where we actually hear the mother independently of the father: The topic of her conversation is something that a wise mother; especially the wise mother of a leader; would want to drive home to her child: women and drink are two large temptations to a man with power and money.⁸⁴

In the same vein, the book of Proverbs presents a collection of wisdom that brings forth truths with specific statements, detailed contrasts and striking comparisons. In essence, these proverbs inform us of how to apply God's wisdom, not our own, to particular situations and decisions in our lives. Proverbs is remarkably written in that it is filled with brevity, parallelism and imagery that are characteristics of good poetry. In fact, the poem that concludes the book of Proverbs is a summary of all that has been said about wisdom throughout the book.⁸⁵

Proverbs 31:10-12 begins with the good that a woman of "noble character" can bring to her work and relationships. While it encourages men to seek a good wife, it also provides the characteristics of a virtuous woman. The words "heart" and "trust" are key words as they suggest a virtuous woman is in possession of a good heart and is

⁸²Tremper Longman, *Proverbs*, Baker Commentary on the Old Testament Wisdom and Psalms (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006), 538.

⁸³*Ibid.*

⁸⁴*Ibid.*

⁸⁵Paul E. Koptak, *Proverbs: From Biblical Text, to Contemporary Life*, 1st ed., The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 675.

trustworthy.⁸⁶ She is dependable and can collaborate in confidence with those in which she interacts, whether it is on a personal level or in a professional context.

God's ideal woman is described as noble. For example, Proverbs 12:4 describes "a woman of noble character." Longman explains why the word "noble" applies to the virtuous woman:

The basic meaning of the term is "strength" and "power," and it can be applied to a variety of people, including a warrior (powerful), a functionary (able), and a landowner (wealthy). While this indicates that "noble" here may not be military, the fact that the poem will associate military language with this woman in the following verses suggests that the composer intends the reader to recognize warrior imagery. In what follows, we see a woman who is engaged in the battle of life, dealing with people and winning an advantage for her family.⁸⁷

The phrase, "who can find," according to Longman, communicates that faithful character has value because it is rare and the question may refer to the elusive nature of wisdom itself:

"Then they will call to me but I will not answer; they will look for me but will not find me."⁸⁸

The character of the virtuous woman is varied and multiple. For instance, her character is described as a treasure while her worth is likened to that of expensive jewelry. The comparison with "rubies" embraces strength, resourcefulness, character and wealth, while "noble character," "capable" and "perfect" suggest total strength.⁸⁹ She is

⁸⁶David Allan Hubbard, *The Communicator's Commentary. Proverbs*, The Communicator's Commentary Series. Old Testament (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1989), 479.

⁸⁷Longman, 542.

⁸⁸Prov. 1:28

⁸⁹Hubbard, 479.

recognized for her worth and for her ability to add value to, or technically appreciate those to whom she comes in contact.⁹⁰

The composer's poetic genius presents the virtuous woman as a "laborer." She is a homemaker and businesswoman. For example, the first description of the virtuous woman's work appears in several verses. Verses 13-18 abound with significant work-related terms, such as: she works with her "hands," and "trades" into the night, she sees or perceives that her trading is "profitable."⁹¹ She ranges far and wide to bring home food or "bread," and provides for her house and maids.⁹² Proverbs' virtuous woman approaches her work much like many women in present-day society who enjoy their work and are anxious to begin their day. Longman describes the virtuous woman as approaching her work with eagerness, vigor and enjoyment.⁹³ She does her work faithfully and willingly.⁹⁴ One might surmise that what God gives her to do not only sustains her, but brings her satisfaction as well.

The virtuous woman is well prepared for the needs of her family. She rises early so that she is ready to meet the needs of the day.⁹⁵ Her preparedness goes beyond providing meals for the household; it includes her daily chores such as sewing as well as preparations for the months ahead.⁹⁶ For instance, she goes out into the public square to

⁹⁰Ibid., 481.

⁹¹Koptak, 675.

⁹²Ibid., 676.

⁹³Longman, 544, 545.

⁹⁴Warren W. Wiersbe, *Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the Old Testament* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1993), 481.

⁹⁵Longman, 544.

obtain wool and flax that she needs.⁹⁷ They are for the summer and winter needs of her family.⁹⁸

Moreover, the language of “distaff” and “spindle” appear in verse 19 only. The context of these words suggests that the translation is appropriate and that these are technical terms that refer to the task of spinning and weaving performed by the virtuous woman, a woman willing to “gird up her loins” (pull up her sleeves) and produce large quantities of woven goods for both her family and for merchants to sell for her.⁹⁹ On the other hand, Proverbs speaks about the opposite of hard work and refers to this as laziness. In fact, in chapter 24, through the character of the sluggard, an habitual lazy person is a contrasting parallel to the virtuous woman.

I went to the field of the sluggard,
past the vineyard of the man who lacks judgment;
thorns had come up everywhere, the ground was covered with
weeds, and the stone wall was in ruins.
I applied my heart to what I observed
and learned a lesson from what I saw:
A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of hands to rest-
and poverty will come on you like a bandit and scarcity like
an armed man.¹⁰⁰

More precisely, the conservative school of thought maintains that laziness can result in poverty and dependency. In essence, basic needs seem to come in abundance for

⁹⁶Ibid., 545.

⁹⁷Ibid.

⁹⁸Hubbard, 480.

⁹⁹John H. Walton, Victor Harold Matthews, and Mark W. Chavalas, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 570.

¹⁰⁰Prov. 24:30-34

anyone who is not engaged in some contributive form of work. The virtuous woman extends her hand to the poor and reaches out to the needy.¹⁰¹

Undeniably, Proverbs speaks well on the character of the virtuous woman and comments on her relationship with her husband. Verses 23-27 mentions how her husband is known at the gates and how she is known for her trustworthiness and faithfulness at home, qualities that are essential to a superlative marriage. Throughout the poem she places great value on her family that may contribute to the perception the community has of her husband and their children.

What is the secret of the virtuous woman who gathers her strength and gets the job done; who finds solutions to problems when they arise; who helps those in need, while at the same time managing the needs of her own family? What is the secret of the woman in the painting of the portrait in the poetic frame at the end of Proverbs? Does it lie in the canvas, the mixture of paints, or the strokes of the artist's brush? The secret rests in her fear of the Lord and her desire to seek and obey God's Word.¹⁰² She arises early in the morning to meditate on the Word and pray for her family.¹⁰³ Her true beauty is within; though the years might change her body, her beauty in the Lord only grows greater.¹⁰⁴ Her honor comes from God as she always does those things that please Him:

“Charm is false and beauty meaningless;
a woman who fears Yahweh is to be praised!”¹⁰⁵

¹⁰¹Longman, 545.

¹⁰²Wiersbe, *Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the Old Testament*

¹⁰³Ibid.

¹⁰⁴Ibid.

¹⁰⁵Longman, 548.

Often an admired characteristic, charm is addressed in the book of Proverbs as something to be thought of with caution. Charm typically refers to how one makes others feel. It is usually defined by one's actions and words and how they motivate individuals to feel special. Quite often charming people are referred to with admiration and fondness; however, Proverbs offers a different view. It suggests that charm can be deceptive and does not exclude views on physical beauty as it is considered to be fleeting and short-lived.¹⁰⁶ Charm may hide a vicious personality, and beauty is hollow unless it is also accompanied by godliness.

In verse 30 the Septuagint has a “doublet” (two identical or similar parts) that some scholars believe is the original language of the verse, preserved to express the “intelligent woman.”¹⁰⁷ Some scholars also suggest that the religious element was added later.¹⁰⁸ The verse in its original form reads, “An intelligent woman is praised, and she praises the fear of the Lord.”¹⁰⁹ Traditionally, women's resourcefulness and toughness have not been recognized, but as for this concluding verse in Proverbs, Longman and Koptak concur that this woman is to be given a reward for her hard work, and it comes in the way of praise, not just in the home but publicly.¹¹⁰

In summation, perhaps the question for today is does the virtuous woman really exist? Symbolically she does. Most would agree that the life of the virtuous woman is not

¹⁰⁶Ibid.

¹⁰⁷George Arthur Buttrick, *The Interpreter's Bible: The Holy Scriptures in the King James and Revised Standard Versions with General Articles and Introduction, Exegesis, Exposition for Each Book of the Bible* (New York, NY: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1951), 957.

¹⁰⁸Ibid.

¹⁰⁹Ibid.

¹¹⁰Longman, 548.

a yard stick by which one is to be measured, but rather a goal defined by God toward which women should be moving. The goal will never be attained; nonetheless, the remarkable virtuous woman is one through whom every woman can get a glimpse of herself. She studies God's word and seeks His guidance in life's decisions. She loves her husband and her family and does not neglect them. She is an energetic leader, honest, thrifty, charitable, creative, kind, and wise. She teaches lessons that can be applied to one's own circumstances such as time and money management, how to manage a household, and a job. She exists as the confident career woman in pursuit of excellence in the work place. She has patience and does not provoke those around her. She opens her mouth and kindness flows from it. Her goal is to be as virtuous a woman as she possibly can. The portrait of the Proverbs 31 woman remains an image of the "A-to-Z's" of all that is valued in, and valuable about a woman. She personifies every woman. She is a tribute to the lives and work of "real" women.

New Testament

Dorcas was the founder of an International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union, one of the greatest labor unions of all time, with branches in all lands. The rate of pay has been small, the hours long, but the union has never gone on strike... It has been a highly successful craft union in the needle trade.¹¹¹

The above introduction could very well describe an essential component of work in American society today. Halford E. Luccock penned these words nearly seven decades ago in a one-volume edition of a book that is still read by great preachers today. In *The Acts of the Apostles In Present-Day Preaching*, Luccock presents the widow Dorcas, who is identified in Acts 9 as the one "who with her needle embroidered her name

¹¹¹Halford Edward Luccock, *The Acts of the Apostles in Present-Day Preaching*, One volume ed. (Chicago, IL; New York, NY: Willett, 1942), 2:16.

ineffaceably into the beneficence of the world.”¹¹² It is this benevolent spirit of Dorcas and her skill as a seamstress that give inspiration to the researcher to choose Acts 9: 39 as the scripture verse that provides a biblical context for doctoral research focused on collaborative leadership and employment marketability of women.

Although not well known, Dorcas stands out in the Bible as a blessing to the widows in Joppa. Simply put, she was a woman of good works and charitable deeds.¹¹³ While the record of her in the Christian Scripture is narrowed to a few verses in Acts, and some scholars give her no recognition, even today her name stands for the charitable use of the needle.¹¹⁴ Her life has motivated women through the ages to dedicate themselves to the needs of the poor.

Dorcas is also referred to as Tabitha.¹¹⁵ Tabitha is the Aramaic form of the Hebrew *tsebi* and, like the Greek word *Dorcas* means gazelle or deer. The gazelle was the epitome of beauty in the orient and was a metaphor for “beloved.”¹¹⁶ It was customary during this time in history for Jews to have two names, one Hebrew and the other Greek or Latin; this would especially be the case in a seaport like Joppa that was both a Gentile and a Jewish town.¹¹⁷ Dorcas may have had both an Aramaic and Greek

¹¹²Herbert Lockyer, *All the Women of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1979), 46.

¹¹³Patricia Chadwick, "The Bible Woman Dorcas"
http://www.essortment.com/all/biblewomendorc_rerm.htm (accessed May 31, 2009).

¹¹⁴*Ibid.*

¹¹⁵Both names will be used in this research, depending on how the referenced scholar has chosen to do so.

¹¹⁶Darrell L. Bock, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 377.

name, Tabitha/Dorcas like John/Mark.¹¹⁸

Dorcas lived during the first century A.D. She made her home in Joppa and was associated with a little band of Christians, most of whom were poor.¹¹⁹ Dorcas, herself, appeared to be a wealthy woman, for her charitable deeds were numerous.¹²⁰ She is introduced in a manner that emphasizes her character. She is “full of good works and acts of mercy.”¹²¹ “Acts of charity” refers to providing alms, which are acts of mercy through charitable giving, and was highly regarded in Judaism as can be seen in the Tobit and Sirach writings.¹²²

From all indications Dorcas was a Christian. She was called “a certain disciple” and is noted as the only female in the New Testament to be referred to as such.¹²³ Some scholars contend that it is possible that Dorcas came to Christ in a church in Joppa that was established by Philip the Evangelist at an early date.¹²⁴ It is commonly known that this early church was characterized as a center of enthusiastic evangelism and its well organized charitable work and perhaps it was from the teachings of the early church that

¹¹⁷M. R. Vincent, "Vincent's Word Studies in the New Testament," (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1985). <http://www.logos.com/search?q=M.R.+Vincent> (accessed April 19, 2009).

¹¹⁸Ibid.

¹¹⁹John F. Walvoord, Roy B. Zuck, and Dallas Theological Seminary, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, 2 vols. (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983), 379.

¹²⁰Bock, 377.

¹²¹Ibid.

¹²²Ibid.

¹²³Chadwick.

¹²⁴Ibid.

Dorcas embraced the concept of service to mankind.¹²⁵ She proved herself to be a real “doer” of the Word of God, not just a “hearer.”¹²⁶ As suggested in Acts 9:36 she created ways of helping the needy, and she carried out her plans well. In other words, she knew what she could do and she did it! New Testament scholars agree that among her charitable deeds was making clothes with her own hands for widows and the needy of her church community.¹²⁷ She was not only willing to give money to a cause, but she was willing to invest herself in the works of kindness.

Although Dorcas is noted for her overwhelming charitable deeds, she is also well known for her life being miraculously restored. Dorcas died and was brought back to life by the Apostle Peter.¹²⁸ When she died, not surprisingly, Dorcas left the church members at Joppa grief-stricken. The following is a portrayal of the aftermath of her death:

Leaders of the congregation called for the Apostle Peter, who was visiting a neighboring city. Peter was renowned for his supernatural power and the church doubtless hoped that he might be able to restore Dorcas to them. When Peter came to the place that she lay, he found that the widows whom Dorcas had helped had laid her out and prepared an eloquent eulogy on the life and character of their greatly loved patroness by displaying some of the many coats and garments which she had made for them. There were aged widows whose hands were too feeble to sew and too poor to pay others for their work. They showed the warm garments Dorcas had made them to protect them from the cold winds. And there were younger widows whose little children had been clothed by Dorcas. They yearned for the Apostle Peter to bring her back. The scene apparently touched Peter’s emotions. He sent them all out of the room and then he kneeled down and prayed. When he was sure that God was going to grant his request, Peter spoke the word of power and authority and raised

¹²⁵Ibid.

¹²⁶Ibid.

¹²⁷Ibid.

¹²⁸Walvoord, Zuck, and Dallas Theological Seminary, 379.

Dorcas from the dead. He then presented her alive to the congregation at Joppa¹²⁹

Obviously, Dorcas was respected and cherished by the church and community at Joppa; however, despite her godly works and alms deeds Scripture tends to overshadow her work with the presence and activity of Peter. One of the original twelve disciples of Jesus, Peter was the only one granted the privilege of an individual post resurrection appearance by Jesus.¹³⁰ He was also known as Simon, as it was customary to have two names in those days. He was appointed as the preacher to the Jews as Paul was to the Gentiles.¹³¹ In the first twelve chapters of Acts, Peter is the spokesperson for the church at Jerusalem. Under the power of the Holy Spirit he performed miraculous works such as healing the sick and raising the dead.¹³² It is at this time of the early church that Peter traveled and performed miracles along the way that scripture introduces Peter to Dorcas.

It is imperative to understand the unique role of Dorcas as it relates to Peter's ministry in the early church. Peter was not confined to Jerusalem and often traveled to the west coast of Palestine. On one of his trips to the west coast, he came upon a man named Aeneas, presumably a Christian, who had been confined to bed with paralysis for eight years, or possibly since he was eight years old.¹³³ Peter was able to cure him by

¹²⁹ Chadwick.

¹³⁰ Walvoord, Zuck, and Dallas Theological Seminary, 264.

¹³¹ C. Peter Wagner, *Acts of the Holy Spirit*, 3rd rev. and updated ed. (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 2008), 195.

¹³² Ajith Fernando, *Acts*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1998), 310, 311.

¹³³ I. Howard Marshall, *The Acts of the Apostles: An Introduction and Commentary*, 1st American ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1980), 178.

proclaiming, “Jesus Christ heals you.”¹³⁴ The healing is immediate and Aeneas is told, “Make your bed.” Given the situation and the meaning of the phrase at that time in history, a command to make his bed meant that Aeneas could now take care of himself.¹³⁵

The Christian community at Joppa heard of Aeneas’ healing, and, knowing Peter was nearby, sent two messengers to bring Peter to Dorcas asking him to “delay not.” Scholars contend that this was a formal request that reflected respect.¹³⁶ Peter was a leader who served the people and responded to their call to go to Joppa not to attend a funeral but to prevent one. It was the Jewish custom first to wash the dead body, and then anoint it with spices for burial; however, instead of anointing Dorcas’ body and burying it, her friends washed it and laid it in an upper room where it would enjoy privacy.¹³⁷ When Peter arrived in the upper room where Dorcas lay in state, he found a group of weeping widows who had been helped by her ministry. Remarkably, there is no record in Acts that any of the apostles had raised the dead; so, their sending for Peter was evidence of their faith in the power of the risen Christ.¹³⁸ After all, when Jesus ministered on earth, Jesus raised the dead, so why would Jesus not be able to raise Dorcas from the dead through his apostle Peter?

¹³⁴Ibid.

¹³⁵Bock.

¹³⁶Ibid., 378.

¹³⁷Marshall, 179.

¹³⁸Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Dynamic*, Bible Study (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1987), 123.

The *Women's Bible Commentary* suggests the story of Dorcas' resurrection and the healing of Aeneas follow the Lukan pattern of pairing stories with male and female characters.¹³⁹ Peter's raising of Dorcas may be compared with the account of Jesus' raising of Jairus' daughter. In both cases, mourners were put out of the room. Peter prayed for both Aeneas and Dorcas:

In his healing of Aeneas there was an implied prayer, but in this greater work he addressed himself to God by solemn prayer, as Christ had done when he raised Lazarus; but Christ's prayer was with the authority of a Son, who quickens whom he will; Peter's was with the submission of a servant who is under direction, and therefore he knelt down and prayed. By the word, a quickening word, a word which is spirit and life: He turned to the body, which intimates that when he prayed he turned from it; lest the sight of it should discourage his faith, he looked another way, to teach us, like Abraham, against hope, to believe in hope, and overlook the difficulties that lie in the way, not considering the body as now dead, lest we should stagger at the promise. But, when he had prayed, he turned to the body, and spoke in his Master's name, according to his example: "Tabitha, arise; return to life again." Power went along with this word, and she came to life, opened her eyes which death had closed.¹⁴⁰

In *Becoming a Fruit-Bearing Disciple*, Terry Thomas states, "It was through the process of being with Jesus that his disciples would learn their behavior as disciples of Jesus."¹⁴¹ Peter commands, *Tabitha cumi*, "Tabitha, arise," words quite similar to those spoken by Jesus to Jarius' daughter, *talitha cumi*, "little girl arise."¹⁴² Jesus took the

¹³⁹Carol A. Newsom and Sharon H. Ringe, *Women's Bible Commentary*, Expanded ed. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), 398.

¹⁴⁰Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 2008), 1683.

¹⁴¹Terry Thomas, *Becoming a Fruit-Bearing Disciple* (Raleigh, NC: Voice of Rehoboth, 2005), 62.

¹⁴²Marshall, 180.

girl by the hand “before” He spoke to her and Peter took Dorcas by the hand “after” she had come to life. In both instances, it was the power of God that restored life.

Although considered among the great miracles of the New Testament, the story of Dorcas is not limited to a demonstration of the power of God to defeat death. On the other hand, it is a great example of how philanthropic work can benefit those in need. Nonetheless, it is important to understand that the life of Dorcas did not have its origin in Acts 9:36. Rather, it is the continuing story of the growth of the Christian movement as recorded in the Gospels. Over the thirty-year span of Acts, it is estimated that the Christian movement grew from 120 to 100,000 among Jews alone.¹⁴³

Scholars have not agreed on the immediate purpose for which Luke wrote Luke-Acts; however, several suggestions have been given: First, Luke set out to make a case for Christianity not being a threat to the Roman Empire; second, Luke-Acts was written to reassure those questioning Jesus’ second coming; third, the two-volume work was intended to be distributed for ecclesiastical purposes and not for Theophilus only; and fourth, Acts was specifically designed to aid Paul in his trial before Caesar.¹⁴⁴

Harold W. Attridge, the Lillian Claus Professor of New Testament at Yale Divinity School, has studied Luke’s writing extensively and finds Luke to be steeped in Scripture, in the Septuagint, and very aware of the Hellenistic historiographical and novelistic literary patterns, all of which “impact Luke’s literary products.”¹⁴⁵ In Attridge’s opinion, Luke had two purposes in writing Luke-Acts:

¹⁴³Wagner, 17.

¹⁴⁴“New Testament Introduction, the Gospel According to Luke,” <http://www.blueletterbible.org/study/intros/luke.cfm> (accessed May 30, 2009).

¹⁴⁵Harold W. Attridge, “The Gospel of Luke: A Novel for Gentiles,” <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/religion/story/luke.html> (accessed June 1, 2009).

Luke wrote two works, the third gospel, an account of the life and teachings of Jesus, and Acts, which is an account of the growth and expansion of Christianity after the death of Jesus down through close to the end of the ministry of Paul.¹⁴⁶

The connection between Dorcas and Peter is described well in Attridge's statement referring to the "growth and expansion" of Christianity. As with the healing of Aeneas, the raising of Dorcas attracted great attention and resulted in many people trusting Jesus Christ. According to the Scripture, after raising Dorcas from the dead, Peter tarried in Joppa for some time staying with a tanner named Simon. He took the opportunity to ground these new believers in the truth of the Word, for faith built on miracles alone is not substantial.¹⁴⁷ Because Peter obeyed the Lord, God sent the "wind of the Spirit" to the Gentiles and they experienced great joy and peace.¹⁴⁸

Luke could not write the entire story of the early church, but he did write about events that shaped its growth and expansion. Much is learned about the early church through his narrative accounts of miracles performed by the apostles as they traveled through Jerusalem and its surrounding communities evangelizing and healing the infirmed. In all probability when Luke heard the amazing story of the miraculous resurrection of Dorcas, in the city of Joppa, he saw this as an important moment for the early church and decided to include her in his narratives. After Dorcas' resurrection, people in the community, undoubtedly, talked with her and resumed serving with her in the community. She was a living advertisement of God's truth and power.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁶Ibid.

¹⁴⁷Ibid.

¹⁴⁸Wiersbe, *Be Dynamic*.

Furthermore, this act of resurrecting Dorcas gave Peter credibility as the rock upon which Jesus' would build his church. Luke wants generations through the ages to learn of this gift of the Holy Spirit that God granted Peter at Pentecost. He wants them to know that God has reserved this gift for them as well.

In essence, Dorcas' death reveals that with God, there is no closure. It is not finished. There is someone, something more, some subversive reality at work in the world for us, the widows, and even the poor. As a disciple of Jesus Christ, Dorcas' behavior and subsequently her role in the early Church, provide insight into the daily activities of how one is successful in all that one does. She touched the lives of others by caring for and loving them. One can easily surmise that Dorcas revered God, so she trusted and feared Him. She embodied behaviors most characteristic of a follower of Jesus Christ.

Indeed, the modern day Dorcas does not reside in Joppa, nor does she live in the Gospel Age. For Dorcas of the twenty-first century, there are no great miracles involving resurrections from the dead, unexplainable healings from disease and sickness, and no demonstration of divine power as once displayed by the disciples of Jesus Christ. Instead, today's Dorcas is riddled with balancing and responding to the needs of family, community and work. Nonetheless, even in some of the most pressing and depressed times, Dorcas of today continues to strive for success in all that she does. She strives for advancement in her Christian walk and is consistent about showing compassion to others. Dorcas personifies the mission of Jesus Christ, and on a metaphoric level, she is a symbol of resurrected life in the church.

¹⁴⁹Joan Osborn, "Virtuous Lady of Acts," Virtual Christian Magazine
<http://www.vcmagazine.org/article.aspx?volume=01&issue=11&article=dorcas> (accessed May 3, 2010).

Theological

Black, feminist and Womanist theologies are the guiding forces for this theological research. Each, in the opinion of this researcher, has emerged out of Liberation theology, a theology that speaks to the plight of all ethnicities, including African Americans, and the oppressed. Latin American Liberation theologians such as Gustavo Gutierrez and Juan Luis Segundo proposed a theology that did not simply deal with the issue of liberation, but rather one that looked at the entirety of Christian doctrine and life from the perspective of the poor.¹⁵⁰

Thus, Liberation theology has taken on many definitions and descriptions. The *Dictionary of Feminist Theologies* states, “Liberation theologians affirm the importance of communities coming together toward liberation; that God as liberator acts through human history in their particular context; and that God’s preferential option for the poor is a call to solidarity with suffering persons.”¹⁵¹ For example, in *Black Religion, Black Theology* J. Deotis Roberts states, “Theology has usually been a response rather than an initiator of ideas and action.”¹⁵² Thomas Hoyt opines in *Interpreting Biblical Scholarship for the Black Church Tradition*, “Traditionally, this liberation has centered on salvation from the power of sin and evil, but there has always been a parallel emphasis for blacks on salvation from the evil concretized in racial exclusivity and the dehumanization of the

¹⁵⁰ Justo L. González, *The Reformation to the Present Day*, 1st ed. (San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, 1984).

¹⁵¹ Letty M. Russell and J. Shannon Clarkson, *Dictionary of Feminist Theologies*, 1st ed. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), 168.

¹⁵² J. Deotis Roberts and David Emmanuel Goatley, *Black Religion, Black Theology: The Collected Essays of J. Deotis Roberts*, African American Religious Thought and Life (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2003), 31.

poor.”¹⁵³ Further, in *Womanist Theology* Stephanie Y. Mitchem states, “Theology is not benign, but carries its own weight of culture and commitment.”¹⁵⁴

Most likely inspired by the Civil Rights Movement that began in the late 1950s, with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. as its most prominent leader, blacks throughout America showed their resolve to confront and expose the oppressive laws and practice that were prevalent throughout America. Several theological movements emerged at the same time, or soon thereafter, all of which impacted women and human equality. One of the main figures of Black Liberation theology that appeared during the Civil Rights Movement was Union Theological Seminary professor James Cone. This theological movement was both orthodox and an affirmation of the black reality, hope and struggle.¹⁵⁵ It focused on the oppressed African American community of which a large portion consisted of women heading households since many fathers were away serving in the Vietnam War. It is worth noting that narratives of slaves and ex-slaves in the United States provided foundational elements for the creation of Black theology.¹⁵⁶

As Cone was “constructing” a Black theology, pointing to the dominant culture’s interpretation and practice of theology, one of his colleagues was engaged in a discussion of the “necessity” of a Black theology. “The basic problem addressed by Black theology,” according to Gayraud S. Gilmore, “is the ideological role that racism plays in

¹⁵³Thomas Hoyt, *Interpreting Biblical Scholarship for the Black Church Tradition*, *Stony the Road We Trod*, ed. Cain Hope Felder (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1991), 29, 30.

¹⁵⁴Stephanie Y. Mitchem, *Introducing Womanist Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002), 35.

¹⁵⁵González, 383.

¹⁵⁶Dwight N. Hopkins and George C. L. Cummings, *Cut Loose Your Stammering Tongue: Black Theology in the Slave Narratives* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), xv.

the culture of the North Atlantic Christian community, a culture that equated the authority and omnipotence of white men with the authority and omnipotence of God himself, a culture which for almost two thousand years created deity in the image of the white man and gave to God the attributes of Caucasian idealization.”¹⁵⁷

Gilmore continues:

Black Theology ... is about the disestablishment of this ideology, the dismantling of the old order based upon it, the liberation of ideology to reality by disengaging the Black religious experience and its theological interpretation from the appropriation of an imposed unreality. Its purpose is an inner-directed, self-determination theology grounded in praxis of liberation from white domination in all areas of faith and life ... What Black Theology affirms is the opposite of the ideology that distorts the Christian faith to make God identical with the culture of white domination. It is, rather, that God has identified himself with the oppressed of every race and nation, and is present in their suffering, humiliation, and death.¹⁵⁸

“Black Theology,” says Gilmore: “has legitimated a return to the religious genius of the ancestors who came from places other than Europe.”¹⁵⁹

At least twenty years before the Black Liberation movement swept the country, Howard Thurman in *Jesus and the Disinherited* raised the questions, “Why is it that Christianity seems impotent to deal radically, and therefore effectively, with the issues of discrimination and injustice on the basis of race, religion and national origin? Is this impotency due to a betrayal of the genius of the religion, or is it due to a basic weakness in the religion itself?”¹⁶⁰ Thurman met Martin Luther King, Jr. while both were at Boston

¹⁵⁷Gayraud S. Wilmore and James H. Cone, *Black Theology: A Documentary History* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1979), 603.

¹⁵⁸*Ibid.*, 604.

¹⁵⁹*Ibid.*, 605.

University, as dean of the chapel and student, respectively. They became very good friends and as a result of that friendship, Thurman later became active in the Civil Rights Movement. He lived to be part of the solution to the very questions he had posed.

The study of Black theology is incomplete without an understanding of the importance of the narrative language and oral tradition of African people. Narrative language provides the rich heritage that is shared in social and academic settings. The following is an example of a theological slave narrative attributed to Cornelius Garner:

De preaching us got 'twont' nothing much. Dat ole white preacher jest was telling us slaves to be good to our masters. We ain't keer'd a bit 'bout dat stuff he was telling us cause we want to sing, pray and serve God in our own way. You see, 'ligion needs a little motion—specially if you gwine feel de spirret.¹⁶¹

In his dissertation *Centering African American Religion* Ivan Douglas Hicks states, "Somehow, Africans enslaved in America were able to create powerful religion that was based on the truth of the Gospel and the powerful and profound tenets of their diverse African spirituality."¹⁶² Additionally, George C. L. Cummins voices, "The narratives provide us with insight concerning the religious and cultural world-views that informed black slaves' theological interpretation of their experience and can be the basis upon which contemporary black theologians can incorporate the "thematic universe" of the black oppressed into their discourse."¹⁶³

It was on the wings of these realities that Cone began his construction of Black theology in America when he published *Black Theology and Black Power* in 1969.

¹⁶⁰Howard Thurman, *Jesus and the Disinherited* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1996), Preface.

¹⁶¹Hopkins and Cummings, 49.

¹⁶²Ivan Douglas Hicks, "Centering African-American Religion" (Temple University, 2003), 79.

¹⁶³Hopkins and Cummings, 138.

Stephanie Y. Mitchem credits Cone with beginning a dialogue that has grown over the years: "James Cone is considered a founder of black theological dialogue and continues its development. He has presented challenges to Christian theology by taking both black and white theologians to task for the work of not addressing the racism embedded in Christianity."¹⁶⁴

Another movement that was taking place concurrently with the Black theology movement was Feminist theology. As late as 1960 most denominations still did not allow the ordination of women, but progress was made in the twenty years that followed, and by the mid-1980s most major Protestant denominations did ordain women.¹⁶⁵ Nevertheless, one of the most contentious issues to arise from the movement for women's equality for Southern Baptists was the ordination of women, both as deacons and ministers.¹⁶⁶ In the field of theology, Letty M. Russell and Rosemary R. Reuther proposed orthodox corrections to traditional male theology, while Mary Daly declared herself a "graduate" from the male-dominated church and called on her sisters to await a "female incarnation of God."¹⁶⁷ Patricia Wilson-Kaster, a scholar in the field of historical and constructive theology, after hearing Daly speak, and not once mentioning Christ at a chapel hour at United Theological Seminary in New Brighton, Minnesota, found herself

¹⁶⁴Mitchem, 41.

¹⁶⁵González, 395.

¹⁶⁶Susan M. Shaw, "Of Words and Women: Southern Baptist Publications and the Progress of Women," *Baptist History and Heritage* 42, no. 2 (Spring 2007): 75.

¹⁶⁷González.

wondering to what extent and for what reason Christianity and contemporary feminism are compatible and even in need of each other.¹⁶⁸

Early Feminist theologians, for example, took extreme stands in environments where they had little to lose. While women had made strides in equal employment opportunities in the government and private sector due to circumstances surrounding the wars, churches lagged in this area of human equality and remained segregated by sex. This remains the case in some churches in America today. Feminist theology not only addressed gender issues in the church, but it also changed the way theological education was taught in seminaries throughout the country.

Harold H. Oliver of Boston University School of Theology suggests that feminism, the underpinning of Feminist theology, may well be the most radical movement the church has ever encountered.¹⁶⁹ According to Oliver:

Feminism opens the door for the most serious and radical rethinking of the nature of religious experience that the West has known since the inception of Christianity. This radical mandate comes closer to the intensity and comprehension of primitive Christianity itself than has any subsequent phenomenon in Western history. Rather than provoking Christians to alarm, this “shaking of the foundation” should be welcomed as an opportunity to re-examine every aspect of the church’s life and faith—indeed, even the nature of the religious life itself.¹⁷⁰

Providing a more contemporary view, Joy Ann McDougall in an article *Feminist Theology for a New Generation* suggests that Feminist theology has progressed since the 1960s, and today is actively involved in reinterpretations of Christianity that seek to

¹⁶⁸Patricia Wilson-Kaster, "Christianity and New Feminist Religions," Religion-online <http://www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=1722> (accessed February 26, 2010).

¹⁶⁹Harold H. Oliver, "Beyond the Feminist Critique: A Shaking of the Foundation," <http://www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=1922> (accessed February 26, 2010).

¹⁷⁰Ibid.

renew the life of the church and its witness to the world.¹⁷¹ She cites three observable features in particular:

First, feminist theologians are drawing on women's everyday lives and especially the dynamics of God's grace working in and through them as sources for theological reflection. ... Second, an increasing number of feminist theologians are directing their energies toward the church's central doctrines and practices—justification by faith, the incarnation, baptism and the Eucharist. ... Third, many women theologians are using insights and practices from Feminist theology in order to address broader social and ethical questions confronting the church, such as globalization, care of the earth, and the shifting patterns of work and family.¹⁷²

As an example of a feminist dedicated to improving the ecological spirit and global culture of the world, McDougall speaks of Roman Catholic theologian Mary Grey as one who is less concerned with reforming a particular confessional tradition than with addressing a broader cultural crisis—that of global capitalism.¹⁷³ She first examines the roots of “our corporate heartlessness” in our culture’s “addiction to consumerism,” its “idolatry of money” and its “massive failure of compassion” for other creatures of the earth.¹⁷⁴ McDougall views Grey as a feminist theologian because of Grey’s focus on the lot of poor women and the disproportionate burdens that capitalist economic structures place on their lives.¹⁷⁵ Both McDougall and Grey represent progressive thoughts among feminist theologians.

¹⁷¹Joy Ann McDougall, "Women's Work: Feminist Theology for a New Generation," *Christian Century* 122, no. 15 (2005): 20.

¹⁷²*Ibid.*

¹⁷³*Ibid.*

¹⁷⁴*Ibid.*

¹⁷⁵*Ibid.*

Much like white feminist theologians, African American women have called into question their suppressed role in the church as well, but also in the community, issues of racism, the family, and the larger society. As such, Womanist theology, which has been developing since the 1980s, has become a voice for some African American women in the United States.¹⁷⁶ Womanist theology agrees with Black theology and Feminist theology on the necessity of engaging race and gender in theological conversation.¹⁷⁷ At the same time it disassociates itself with them in that it views Black theology as placing its emphasis on race and Feminist theology as primarily addressing the oppression of white women.¹⁷⁸

Jacquelyn Grant defines a Womanist as, “one who has developed survival strategies in spite of the oppression of her race and sex in order to save her family and her people ... In any case, Womanist means being and acting out who you are and interpreting the reality yourself. Black women speak out for themselves.”¹⁷⁹ As she explains in her essay *Womanist Theology: Black Women's Experience as a Source for Doing Theology, with Special Reference to Christology*

Womanists are Sojourner Truth, Jarena Lee, Amanda Berry Smith, Ida B. Wells, Mary Church Terrell, Mary McLeod Bethune and countless others not remembered in any historical study. A womanist then is a strong black woman who has sometimes been mislabeled as a domineering castrating matriarch. A Womanist is one who has developed survival strategies in spite of the

¹⁷⁶Linda E. Thomas, "Womanist Theology, Epistemology, and a New Anthropological Paradigm," Cross Currents <http://www.aril.org/thomas.htm> (accessed May 18, 2009).

¹⁷⁷Ibid.

¹⁷⁸Ibid.

¹⁷⁹Jacquelyn Grant, "Womanist Theology: Black Women's Experience as a Source for Doing Theology, with Special Reference to Christology," in *African American Religious Studies*, ed. Gayraud S. Wilmore (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1989).

oppression of her race and sex in order to save her family and her people.¹⁸⁰

On the other hand, Mitchem points out different approaches that shape Womanist theology. As examples she refers to Emilie Townes as taking Womanist ethics on a path grounded in history and to Katie Cannon's use of Zora Neale Hurston's life story.¹⁸¹ She includes several other Womanists in a category of having, "embarked on a journey that does not always have clear signposts."¹⁸²

In *Womanist Theology: Black Women's Voices*, Delores S. Williams assigns a teaching function to her approaches on Womanist theology.

Womanist theology should teach Christians new insights about moral life based on ethics supporting justice for women, survival, and a productive quality of life for poor women, children, and men. This means that the Womanist theologian must give authoritative status to black folk wisdom...and to black women's moral wisdom...when she responds to the question, "How ought the Christian to live in the world?" Certainly tensions may exist between the moral teachings derived from these sources and the moral teachings about obedience, love, and humility that have usually buttressed presuppositions about living the Christian life. Nevertheless, Womanist theology, in its didactic intent must teach the church the different ways God reveals prophetic word and action for Christian living.¹⁸³

Maxine Clarke Beach in her article *Women and Contemporary Interpretation of the Bible* gives recognition to Womanist theologians who link the experiences of African American women to female biblical characters:

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Mitchem, 74.

¹⁸² Ibid., 75.

¹⁸³ Delores S. Williams, "Womanist Theology: Black Women's Voices," religion-online <http://www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=445> (accessed March 1, 2010).

Womanist Bible scholars and authors such as Renita Weems, Delores Williams, Joan Martin, Clarice Martin, Katie Cannon, Cheryl Gilkes, Kelly Brown, and many others have stepped into the biblical dialogue by using the experience of African American women as the starting place for a dialogue with the sacred stories of Hagar, the Egyptian woman in Genesis, as a formative story of relationships between women of different races in a world dominated by male power structures. Africans such as the wife of Moses, the bride in the Song of Songs, or the Ethiopian eunuch

take on new dimensions when the teller of the tales are women of African decent.¹⁸⁴

Perhaps the most cited work in Womanist theology is Alice Walker's *In Search of Our Mother's Garden*. Walker suggests that black women experience a different and more intense kind of oppression than that of white women, an idea that has been embraced by Womanist theology.¹⁸⁵ This theology engages the full spectrum of issues that affect black women's lives, and in its inclusiveness, the lives of all black people. Among its many noble causes, Womanist theology speaks on behalf of economically disadvantaged and suppressed black women and those black women workers whose voices are ignored in the capitalist world order.¹⁸⁶

Nonetheless, Walker's treatment of the writings of Rebecca Jackson is controversial due to an inferred lesbian relationship between its principal character and

¹⁸⁴Maxine Clarke Beach, "Women and Contemporary Interpretation of the Bible: The Emergence of White Christian Feminism" <http://gbgm-umc.org/umw/bible/feminism.html> (accessed February 27, 2010).

¹⁸⁵Alice Walker, *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens* (San Diego, CA; New York, NY; London, England Harcourt Brace, 1983).

¹⁸⁶Linda E. Thomas, "Womanist Theology, Epistemology, and a New Anthropological Paradigm" <http://www.aril.org/thomas.htm> (accessed May 18, 2009).

her companion.¹⁸⁷ This gives pause for some female theologians and ethicists who would otherwise align themselves with Womanist theology. Ethicist Cheryl J. Sanders contends:

Womanist is a preferred alternative to lesbian because it connotes connectedness and not isolation, and a Womanist is one who loves other women, sexually and/or nonsexually, and who appreciates and prefers women's culture. Clearly, in Walker's view, sexual preference is not a morally or ethically significant factor in determining whether or not one is "committed to the survival and wholeness of entire people, male and female." ...In my view, there is a fundamental discrepancy between the womanist criteria that would affirm and/or advocate homosexual practice, and the ethical norms the black church might employ to promote the survival and wholeness of black families.¹⁸⁸

Writes Monica A. Coleman, "If one is not willing to openly, forthrightly, and consistently critique heterosexism and homophobia with the same fervor as the critique of sexism, racism, and classism, then perhaps one should not be a Womanist."¹⁸⁹

Sanders also suggest that God and Christ do not appear to be relevant to Womanist theology:

It is problematic for black women who are doing Womanist scholarship from the point of Christian faith to weight their claims of the Womanist perspectives over against the claims of Christianity. The Womanist perspective ascribes ultimate importance to the right of black women to name our own experience; in Christian perspective, Christ is the incarnation of claims God makes upon us as well as the claims we make upon God. While there may be no inherent disharmony between these two assertions, the fact remains that there are no references to God or Christ in the definition of Womanist. For whatever reason, christology seems not to be directly relevant to the Womanist concept. ...I suspect that it is Christianity, and not womanism, that

¹⁸⁷Rebecca Jackson, "Gifts of Power: The Writings of Rebecca Jackson," in *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens*, ed. Alice Walker (San Diego, CA: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1983), 71.

¹⁸⁸Cheryl J. Sanders, "Roundtable Discussion: Christian Ethics and Theology in Womanist Perspective," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 5, no. 2 (Fall 1989): 89, 90.

¹⁸⁹Monica A. Coleman, "Must I Be Womanist?," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 22, no. 1 (Spring 2006): 88.

forms the primary ground of theological and ethical identity with our audacious, serious foremothers.¹⁹⁰

Emilie Townes applauds Sanders "attempt to raise critical and constructive questions regarding the use of the word womanist." Townes finds, however, "that she [i.e., Sanders] begins with a conceptual error that leads her down an unproductive path."¹⁹¹ Although their perspectives on Womanist theology differ, Townes opines:

Sanders is helpful in raising the question of how Womanist Christian ethicists and theologians integrate christology with a radically immanent concept of the divine—the Spirit, and traditional understandings of God within the Afro-American religious context. And perhaps more to the point, how can Womanist Christian ethicists and theologians do so with integrity and in true dialogue with history, with the contemporary Afro-American religious community, and with the larger Afro-American community?"¹⁹²

M. Shawn Copeland speaks of Sanders as one who "reminds us of the need for ongoing study and conversation about the sources and methods to be employed in the continued reshaping of Black theology."¹⁹³ Although perspectives differ and approaches to teaching and preaching Womanist theology vary, there remains harmony interwoven throughout it. As an example, Mitchem draws an analogy to jazz:

It uses many instruments, works within a different rhythmic structure, and depends upon the creativity and skill of individuals. [It] utilizes improvisation ... demanding a level of skill and the ability to move free of the written music. Womanist theology also demands skill, a movement in the light of faith from the Western written page to a statement of the seldom-voiced experience of

¹⁹⁰Sanders: 90.

¹⁹¹Emilie M. Townes, "Roundtable Discussion Reply to C. J. Sanders' Christian Ehtics and Theology in Womanist Perspectives," *Journal of Femininst Studies in Religion* 5, no. 2 (Fall 1989): 94.

¹⁹²Ibid.: 97.

¹⁹³M. Shawn Copeland, "Roundtable Discussion Reply to C. J. Sanders' Christian Ehtics and Theology in Womanist Perspectives," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 5, no. 2 (Fall 1989): 101.

African American women. Womanist theology, then, critically draws from the many meanings of faith in the lives of black women in order to assess doctrinal and ecclesial constructions and to begin reconstructions that have relevance, meaning, and power in their lives.¹⁹⁴

Many rhythmic tones are encountered when discussing the subject of theology as evidenced by the many schools of thought that have grown out of it. The cacophony of history gave rise to the Black liberation, Feminist, and Womanist theological movements in American history in the same manner that other causes gave rise to previous social, philosophical and theological movements.

The theologies that are at the heart of this discussion share one concern that permeates throughout this research: to confront human oppression in all its forms and manifestations. Although the differences in Black, Feminist, and Womanist theologies, as described throughout this paper, cannot be ignored, research also suggests that these differences have diminished with the passing of time. Both Black theology and Womanist theology look to slave or black heritage as essential aspects of their schools of thought, while white Feminist theology draws on the everyday lives of women. Liberation, Black, Feminist, and Womanist theologies all have direct influence on the development of this employment marketability study. The empowerment of women is its intended objective. The aforementioned theologies were constructed to combat or aptly define social forces that have economically incarcerated women as well as negatively impacted their professional advancement. By analyzing the discerned expression of God through these theologies, it is clear that God not only speaks to women regarding their professional progress but seeks to inspire them toward excellence in this regard as well.

¹⁹⁴ Mitchem, 46.

CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGY

Hypothesis

The purpose of the study was to design an employment marketability model that would increase the number of job interviews and job acquisitions of women who participated in the model. Therefore this study hypothesized that participants in the Employment Marketability training program (seminars) were likely to be successful candidates when interviewing for a job.

Intervention

Data reported by the Bureau of Labor Statistics in April 2010 indicate that the unemployment rate for women was 7.7 percent.¹ For African American women it was 13.7 percent compared to 9.0 percent for white women.² In order to address the current problem of unemployment among women, guided by collaborative leadership theory, seminars were designed and implemented to increase the probability of women being the successful candidate when interviewing for a job. Specifically the Employment Marketability Model included seminars based on information gathered from the focus

¹United States Department of Labor, "Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey," U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics <http://data.bls.gov/PDQ/servlet/SurveyOutputServlet> (accessed May 19, 2010).

²United States Department of Labor, "Employment Status of the Civilian Population by Race, Sex, and Age," U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (accessed May 19, 2010).

group. Perspective participants were recruited from Metropolitan Community Development Corporation (MCDC), and Metropolitan Baptist Church.

The focus group consisted of five African American women. Four women were unemployed and one woman was employed but facing imminent unemployment.

Using focus group techniques that are described by Richard A. Krueger in *Focus Groups: A Practical Guide for Applied Research*, participants were instructed to engage in a series of questions directed by the researcher to gather information on how the group perceives its current employment status as well as factors that contribute to difficulty obtaining a preferred job (Appendix A).³ The group provided significant insight on the changing work environment, complicated application and interview processes, and fear associated with changing and entering into new career and employment areas. Although group discussions were not conducted several times with similar types of participants to identify trends and patterns in perspectives, several themes provided clues and insights as to how personal and professional experiences and perceptions of unemployed women is associated with one's employment marketability. Participants' insight resulted in specific themes that ultimately influenced the selection of several seminar topics.

Based on information obtained from the focus group, a total of four seminars was conducted on three consecutive Saturdays at Metropolitan administrative building in Largo, Maryland. Prior to the first seminar, participants completed an anonymous self-administered questionnaire to assess their perspectives on seminar topics. The seminars were Bible Study, Emotional Readiness in the Workplace, Reinventing One's Skills, and Presentation and Professionalism in the Workplace (Appendix B).

³Richard A. Krueger and Mary Anne Casey, *Focus Groups: A Practical Guide for Applied Research*, 4th ed. (Los Angeles, CA: Sage, 2009), 27-32.

Bible Study was held at the beginning of each seminar. Female ministers from Metropolitan presented interactive lessons on Naomi and Ruth complete with handouts.

The Emotional Readiness in the Workplace Seminar was designed to better equip women to address and handle career challenges associated with fear, age, and racial discrimination, as well as conflict with managers and co-workers.

Reinventing One's Skills Seminar focused on motivating participants' exploration of alternative careers, identifying strategies for navigating ever changing work environments, and offered specific ways for promoting one's continuous growth and expansion in the workplace. This seminar also included the cover letter and resume writing techniques, and interviewing skills.

The Presentation and Professionalism Seminar addressed what one is to wear when interviewing and dressing appropriately for the job. Another segment of this seminar included best practices on how to research the job market and promote the awareness of various types of application such as the private sector, government and electronic. The final component of this seminar introduced the importance of mentoring in the workplace and its relationship to obtaining a job and career advancement in the workplace.

Each presenter for the seminars received a letter from the researcher inviting her to design and facilitate a seminar on a specific area relating to employment (Appendix C). Each seminar was conducted for a duration of four hours. Seminar presenters were women representing professionals such as: clinical psychology, university faculty, human resource management, career coaching, and the clergy.

Organizations that were in collaborative relationship with this research project include MCDC and The Garment's Hem, affiliates of Metropolitan, and Enterprise Solutions, Inc., a multi-disciplinary consulting firm. These organizations assisted in the development and implementation of the employment marketability seminars. One-on-one professional services were offered by collaborators to assist participants with their specialized employment needs. An implementation period of six weeks allowed participants to employ strategies and skills shared by seminar presenters. At the end of the six weeks, participants were sent a letter of invitation to participate in a one-on-one, face-to-face interview with the researcher (Appendix D). At this time an anonymous post- seminar questionnaire was administered to assess any change in their perceptions of, and experiences with their pursuit of employment. An honorarium was given to each participant.

Sample

A convenient sample, a method of investigation used when measuring an entire population is not possible, was the strategy used for identifying participants in the employment marketability seminars. For three consecutive weeks, an advertisement was placed in Metropolitan's weekly church bulletin and its online newsletter to recruit women for the employment marketability study (Appendix E). Study participants were identified from ten women who responded to the advertisement. Also, study participants were recruited from MCDC. Eligibility for participation was based on current employment status, interest, commitment, and availability of schedules. Of these ten women, four met the study's eligibility criteria.

The sample consisted of African American women thirty-eight to fifty-four years of age. Three out of four of the women were single and heads of household, whereas one was married with children. A master degree had been attained by three of the women, while one held a bachelor degree. The average number of years in the workplace for the sample was twenty-three years. The duration of unemployment ranged from three to eight months. The sample included an administrative assistant, educator, project manager, and program director. Two in the sample were members of Metropolitan and two were not.

Research Design

This research was guided by the action research approach. According to Davydd J. Greenwood in *Introduction to Action Research*, “Action research is social research carried out by a team that encompasses a professional action researcher and the members of an organization, community, or network (“stakeholders”) who are seeking to improve the participants’ situation.”⁴ Throughout this study the researcher gathered information from participants using the action-research process. The information was shared with collaborating leaders and used to stimulate action. The information was evaluated for its effectiveness and its impact toward positive change.

Instrumentation

A twenty-two item anonymous questionnaire consisting of open and closed-ended response categories was created to gather information on participants’ views on spirituality, emotional readiness for the workplace, conflict in the workplace, reinventing

⁴Davydd J. Greenwood and Morten Levin, *Introduction to Action Research: Social Research for Social Change*, 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2007), 3.

one's skills, the job search, professionalism and mentoring (Appendix F). These various topics were measured in the following ways:

Spirituality—whether or not one will set aside time daily for devotionals, prayers, and meditation, and to what degree does one's spirituality impact one's feeling about one's current employment status?

Emotional Readiness—the degree of fear about securing employment and returning to the workplace; awareness of practices and procedures that address age and racial discrimination, and conflict in the workplace.

Reinventing One's Skills—the possibility of reinventing one's self through educational courses or a career change.

Presentation and Professionalism—whether one's image impacts getting a job; whether one has received assistance with cover letters, resumes, and job applications; whether or not one has a mentor; how often does one interact with the mentor; whether mentor assists the mentee in reaching career goals.

As a follow-up to the questionnaire, a series of open-ended questions were asked to determine participants' perceptions of the impact of the Employment Marketability seminars on their job seeking and current employment status. Participants were asked to give a verbal evaluation of each seminar as it related to their employment goals. A series of questions focused on participants' opinions of the seminars that were most and least beneficial to them (Appendix G). Questions also centered on how each seminar impacted participants' current job seeking and if participants would recommend the seminars to other women in the church. Participants signed release forms granting researcher

permission to tape-recorded their responses (Appendix H). Recordings were professionally transcribed.

Data Collection

Data in this study was analyzed in the following ways: Focus group data were analyzed by using a systematic approach involving transcribing, organizing, coding, and identifying patterns and themes, and writing the results. Pre-seminar and post-seminar questionnaires were analyzed by comparing the responses provided in both questionnaires. Questionnaire data reflected the actual number of participants in the study. Data analyses in this study were straightforward. They involved interpreting both quantitative and qualitative information that sought to describe the participants' perceptions, attitudes, and experiences related to their employment status and conditions. Moreover, the data in this study showed the impact that the Employment Marketability Model had on increasing the probability of participants being the successful candidate when interviewing for a job. Also, these data showed that at the crux of this model there was an understanding of how women play an active role as change agents.

CHAPTER FIVE

FIELD EXPERIENCE

Collection of Data

... I believe He [God] is still showing me things and when I totally can give it all to Him, He begins to move. I have to remember to do what I can do and He will do all that I can't.

—Anonymous

The collection of data for this research was completed in three phases. Phase one involved conducting a focus group to gather information to assist with the development and implementation of the Employment Marketability Model, the intervention used for this research study. An appropriate method for this phase of the research study was the focus group interviews because, “Focus groups place people in a natural situation and inhibitions often are relaxed. ... The more natural environment increases candor by the participants.”¹

The second phase of the data collection involved the development and implementation of a self-administered questionnaire; both open and closed-ended questions were designed to assess participants' perceptions and experiences with their current employment status. The Employment Marketability Model Survey was administered both before and after participation in the Employment Marketability Model seminars. The survey questionnaire was an ideal method for assessing participants'

¹Richard A. Krueger and Mary Anne Casey, *Focus Groups: A Practical Guide for Applied Research*, 4th ed. (Los Angeles, CA: SAGE, 2009), 44, 45.

perceptions and experiences because they produced statistics—that is, quantitative or numerical descriptions of some aspects of the study’s population.² Moreover, the primary way of collecting information was by asking questions, with the answers constituting the data to be analyzed.³

The third phase of data collection was in-depth interviewing. After participation in the Employment Marketability Model seminars, participants provided substantive feedback on each seminar and how they impacted their specific job seeking attitudes and behavior. In-depth interviewing allowed for, “a conversation with a purpose.”⁴ In in-depth interviewing, participants’ perspectives were shared concerning the phenomenon of interest as the participant, not the researcher, viewed it.⁵ Simply put, the in-depth interviews permitted the researcher to understand the meanings people hold for their everyday activities.⁶

Research Setting

The setting for the focus group and the Employment Marketability Model for the Women of Metropolitan Baptist Church project was the boardroom of the administrative building of the researcher’s ministry context. The focus was conducted in the evening during the month of January 2010, while the Employment Marketability Model seminars were conducted in the morning. The Employment Marketability Model participants

²Floyd J. Fowler, *Survey Research Methods*, 2nd ed., Applied Social Research Methods Series V. 1 (Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1993), 19.

³*Ibid.*

⁴Catherine Marshall and Gretchen B. Rossman, *Designing Qualitative Research*, 5th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2010), 80.

⁵*Ibid.*

⁶*Ibid.*, 82.

arrived thirty minutes prior to the beginning of devotion and Bible study to enjoy a continental breakfast and communicate the events that had occurred in their lives during the week. The researcher observed that many accounts were shared about job search strategies that participants had utilized since the previous meeting.

Focus Group

Following protocol for conducting a focus group as described by Krueger in *Focus Group*, the researcher asked intentionally crafted questions aimed at generating conversation on issues of employment, of five unemployed women. The women were twenty-eight to fifty-four years of age. Information gathered from the group was analyzed and used to construct a pre and post questionnaire for the intervention phase of the Employment Marketability Model project. The research setting was ideal given that the room was private and secluded and furnished with a large circular table where participants and researcher sat. Snacks were available throughout the evening. This established an informal atmosphere promoting comfort and a feeling of familiarity and safety. Small gifts were distributed at the end of the session to express appreciation for participation.

Seminars

Four hours were designated for each seminar conducted on one of three consecutive Saturdays in March 2010. Conducting each seminar was a professional in the subject area of her presentation. Participants, who all maintained a 100% attendance record, were delighted to engage in conversation with the presenter. Participants received handouts consisting of practical information relating to their employment situation. Devotion and Bible study (Spirituality Seminar) began each seminar session. Emotional

Readiness, Reinventing One's Skills, and Presentation and Professionalism seminars, along with their sub-topics, were conducted on respective Saturdays. Lunch was brought in and set up by a context associate at each seminar. The outer boardroom area posed a comfortable and consistent place for each seminar. Regular access to bathrooms and refreshments were important given the overall length of each seminar and the attention required of each individual for active participation.

In-depth Interviews

An in-depth interview was conducted with each participant six weeks after the last seminar. Each interview was scheduled for thirty-five minutes. The purpose was to determine the impact of the Employment Marketability seminars on participants' current employment status. Written consent to audio record the interview was granted by each participant. Each interview was conducted in a quiet inner office of the researcher's ministry context. Refreshments were provided to establish a consistent and comfortable environment. At this final data collection session, participants were reluctant to end their involvement in the study and requested opportunities to continue to meet and share their employment experiences with each other.

Personnel

In addition to the participants, presenters, and the researcher being present at every seminar, a professional associate, context associates, employment specialists, and collaborating partners were present.

Analysis of Data

Focus Group

Focus group data yielded several themes that reflect participants' current employment status, concerns, and experiences. The remainder of this section provides a detailed discussion of relevant themes and patterns that emerged throughout the focus group.

Most participants agreed that the economic state of the country was a factor in their unemployment. However, more significant factors such as health issues, educational pursuits, change in industry priorities and limited employment options influenced their unemployment status. This suggests that despite the nation's economic decline, personal and professional factors have a significant impact on employment status. Although age discrimination participants did not provide specific details concerning the reasons for their unemployment, it was clear that there were multiple and complicated factors which contributed to their employment status. Interestingly, participants did not mention issues related to salary, promotion, benefits, competition or productivity as factors associated with their employment status.

Age Discrimination

Among focus group discussion, age discrimination refers to an assumed belief that employment opportunities and actual hiring have been based on age bias. In fact, seasoned unemployed participants claim that this is a factor contributing to their difficulty in securing preferred employment. Although no specific information was discussed concerning actual experiences of discrimination based on age, there was much

consensus that because of their age, as often revealed by their work histories, seasoned unemployed participants perceived that they have fewer job options and are passed over for jobs for which they apply.

“Any old job just won’t do,” was expressed by seasoned unemployed women who have long work histories in senior management positions or positions of equal standing. Participants’ experiences as financial analysts, information technology senior managers, department directors and project managers contribute to their pursuit of jobs within their current fields at similar or higher entry levels. One participant stated, “I’ve come too far in my work experiences and I’m not going back to entry level ... I’m just not going to do it.” Interestingly, participants did not indicate that they were at a point in their job searches of accepting employment that is non-preferred or entry level.

Instant Gratification

On the other hand, the “instant gratification” participants, or the younger unemployed women, in the group expressed frustration with lengthy applications and even the interview process. This suggests that younger participants are looking for “instant” hiring. Cumbersome on-line applications and drawn out waiting periods seem to have its toll on younger participants. These women agreed that a sense of entitlement tends to permeate the attitudes and expectations of young people when seeking and applying for jobs. Interestingly, younger participants offered their perspectives on why some seasoned unemployed women may find it difficult to secure preferred employment. They contend that young hires typically earn less money and are technically savvier than older employees.

Job Applications

Similarly, the more seasoned unemployed women in the group expressed much frustration with job application processes given that they are very lengthy, redundant and tend not to provide value information such as contact or follow-up employer information. One participant stated, “You don’t even know if they received your application and you can’t call to find out.” Other comments indicated that most application processes are labor intensive and exhausting. The lack of feedback or contact from the prospective employer contributes to fatigue and anxiety. In some cases, participants expressed feelings of depression and heightened levels of anxiousness and anxiety when applying for jobs. Interestingly, no participants mentioned the role of social networks or networking as a positive aspect of seeking and/or applying for jobs. It appears that significant networks are absent or not as relevant for participants when applying for their preferred jobs.

Fear

Fear proved to be a significant factor in preventing seasoned participants from exploring and pursuing new career areas. For example, one participant stated, “It’s fear ... you know ... it keeps you narrow ... from branching out.” Several participants claimed it is difficult to begin “again” in the labor market. One participant put it this way, “I simply don’t know where to begin. I don’t have a clue.” In essence, the notion of changing careers or establishing oneself in a new field is arguably problematic because it involves grappling with fear—it is the fear of failure and rejection. Participants contend that this fear is binding and narrows not only their employment opportunities but also their desire to grow professionally.

Conflict in the Workplace

Conflict with younger managers suggests that seasoned unemployed women have experienced working with younger employees who are often in supervisory positions. Participants agreed that younger supervisors have little to no product knowledge and are charged with the responsibility of supervising older employees with greater work and product experience. Some participants claimed that this causes tension and conflict in the workplace and contributes to undesirable working conditions. One participant stated, “Ninety-five percent of my workplace was all young people and they didn’t know a thing.”⁷

Reinventing One’s Skills

Reinventing skills refers to the degree to which participants actively pursue and develop new and improved skills to increase one’s employment opportunities and marketability. Interestingly, only one participant indicated that she was learning more about a new software package and had made some adjustments to her resume as a consequence. Other participants indicated that they try to “keep up” with their career fields by “reading.” Perhaps the poor response to reinventing and learning new skills reflects participants’ fear of branching out or expanding oneself into new career areas. It may also suggest that participants are overwhelmed or stifled by their current employment status and are not motivated or available to engage in activities geared toward improving one’s skills. Hence, unemployed women may find it difficult to begin the process of moving toward reinventing or re-tooling skills especially under stressful circumstances such as unemployment.

⁷[Focus Group Participant], Largo, MD, January 8, 2010.

Spirituality

Faith refers to the role of spirituality in dealing with participant's employment status. Interestingly, only two women mentioned how "faith" sustained them through unemployment. For example, one participant noted how faith-centered co-workers and friends were important as a means of encouragement and strength. Referring to faith, one participant stated, "Well, something tends to get you through it ... you always seem to get through it!" Surprisingly, the majority of participants did not share their perspectives on spirituality and their employment status. In fact, among all participants, there was no mention of prayer, meditation, reading the Bible, attending church services or participating in special religious or faith-centered groups related to dealing with their employment status. This may indicate that participants in the group are uncomfortable sharing their views on spirituality as it relates to their employment status or it may simply indicate that there is no significant role of spirituality in this area of their lives.

Employment Support Services

Employment Support Services refers to services provided by agencies or other organizations. Surprisingly, no participants indicated that they were currently receiving any form of employment support services. This might suggest that seasoned unemployed women are more likely to use personal networks or other forms of support offered by non-employment type agencies. In fact, much of the focus group discussion pointed to participants' personal uses of websites, technology and the application process and procedures.

Race

Race is an interesting factor associated with unemployed women in the focus group. Throughout much of the discussion, participants referred to “being Black or African American” as a predictor of negative outcomes. For example, one participant mentioned how her voice is not easily discernable as Black or African American. As such, perspective employers assume that she is non-Black. After being recognized as Black during the interview process, participants agreed that the process would take a negative turn. This suggests that race is a factor in the hiring process. For participants, negotiating their race is, at times, difficult and challenging when seeking their preferred job.

Seminars

Pre-seminar and post-seminar data indicate that the Employment Marketability Model had a significant impact on participants’ perceptions of, and experiences with their employment status. Specifically, participants report positive change in attitudes and behaviors associated with each seminar topic. These findings suggest that participants’ attendance and involvement in each seminar was likely to have motivated and encouraged new job-seeking attitudes and behaviors.

Bible Study

Prior to participation in the Bible Study seminar, three out of four participants set aside time for daily Bible study. However, post-seminar data indicated that all participants set aside time for daily Bible study; have grown in their own spirituality and

are encouraging others to pray and meditate daily. Offering positive comments about the Bible Study Seminar one participant had this to say:

That was the highlight for me. Just the Bible Devotion, because I don't know the Bible like I should know it, and I've always been working to have a spiritual relationship with God, and so when I knew there was going to be a Bible component, I thought that this is just perfect, because you need God in your life. You need God to direct you on your path and you need God to bring the right people in your life who can help you to get to that path. ...I enjoyed learning about Ruth and Naomi, because I heard of Ruth and Naomi, but I never really knew Ruth and Naomi, and after hearing the story of Ruth and Naomi, I look at so many different women now and I can see a Ruth and I can see a Naomi, and so after having those devotions, it gave me the name that I want for my non-profit ... God directed me to this workshop, because I never saw your first focus group announcement. I never saw that, it wasn't meant for me to see that, but it was meant for me to be here, and I had no idea that the devotions were going to be about Ruth and I just thought that was such a way to empower women to know that even before you were born, other women had challenges and they got through theirs, and you can get through yours, but you can't do it alone. You got to bring the right people in your life. You have to be able to let go. You have to be able to be open to new things. I just think that is so crucial. I think whatever you do, you have to have the Biblical piece.⁸

Another participant spoke favorably about the Bible Study Seminar. She expressed how the seminar changed her spiritual life. She offered the following as her testimony:

The devotional part of these three weeks was phenomenal for me. Not just because it was three perspectives on Ruth, and I know all about the Book of Ruth now, but because they were different and what, I think what happened with me, was that I learned that, you know, it wasn't so much I was seeking, you know to find experience or take another class or whatever, that perhaps the gift I really needed was right inside of me all long, but that, you know, if I kept my mind open and kept my heart open, and really positioned myself, that maybe I was going to get through this. So I have to say, I want to put a plug in that the three ministers ... were

⁸[Study Participant], interview by author, Largo, MD, May 1, 2010.

phenomenal for me, especially the part where they talked about their own journey. So, I faced a lot of challenges in between those weeks, I didn't talk to people about ... financial challenges and a lot of things that I wasn't sure if I was going to be able to get through, but I had my faith redeemed again, and not just from listening to them, but meeting these women out here and listening to their stories and knowing that I wasn't the only one ... that there were people like you who cared enough to try to put this together, to try to actually help people.⁹

The above remarks conveyed the thinking of all participants.

Emotional Readiness

Post-seminar data indicated that half of the participants reported a reduction in fear concerning their employment status. They also indicated an increased awareness of racial and age discrimination practices in the workplace. Although their awareness of strategies to address conflict in the workplace remained the same, data suggested an increase in participants' willingness to address conflict in the workplace.

The Emotional Readiness seminar allowed participants to express and expound their feelings, anxieties, and frustrations concerning their recent job losses. Providing the opportunity for the validation of feelings associated with difficult work experiences motivated participants to move closer toward coping strategies and a readiness to address in the workplace. All participants expressed positive views on this seminar. The following are quotations that represent those views:

On the Emotional Readiness, the validation of having been laid off, not having a job, being unemployed, that was fear. I remember [the presenter] addressed it in terms of physically how we were feeling stress, and I think that validated ... a lot of what, at least what I was feeling. The ages and the racial discrimination ... I thought that [the presenter] ... had given us really good handouts on that and good examples, but for me discussing the anxiety and

⁹Ibid.

the worry, not only did it validate it, but it gave me coping skills just a little bit just to talk about it, and find out that other people in the group were experiencing the same thing ... oh one more thing too, her personal examples, I thought were really good, and even though we didn't turn in the questions that she gave us to answer, I found out a couple of things, surprisingly, that I was feeling at the time.¹⁰

The part that I enjoyed most about that workshop is that it gave me the tools that I needed to understand my personal situation and being removed from my employment of fourteen years. I had not yet accepted that situation and it allowed me to go through the emotional aspect of when you're losing a job ... so it gave me a different perspective on how I should approach it and some of the variables that may have contributed to the removal of my position and then how I can also move forward into a healthier life.¹¹

Reinventing One's Skills

Post-seminar data showed no change in participants' belief that they could reinvent themselves and their skills in the workplace, however having participated in the seminar, all participants were likely to consider enrolling in continuing education courses, certificate programs, or owning their own business. One participant stated in her interview, "I think the overall message [of the presenter] was have flexibility, be open minded and maybe consider things that you wouldn't think of for yourself in order to workshop is that it allowed you to not think in the box. It allowed you to think outside the box. There are other options you can take in looking for employment. It might not be the permanent position you want, but there are other avenues, other skills that you can learn

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Ibid.

from other positions that can help you to secure the position that you are permanently seeking.”¹²

Presentation and Professionalism

Having attended the Presentation and Professionalism seminar participants were somewhat more likely to seek specialized services to assist with cover letter and resume writing. Also, participants were significantly more likely to research the dos and don'ts of how to complete a job application. One participant who worked with the presenter outside the seminar reported, “[The presenter] worked with me for about a week and a half on my resume and gave me some examples and the one thing I liked about it, she had two main types of resumes, the chronological and also the summary. She liked the way my cover letter was, but the one thing she gave me was advice on making it personal or making it specific to that job you're responding to.”¹³

Another participant spoke of the challenge of job searching online:

I liked that [the presenter] gave samples of resumes that were successful and samples of resumes that needed more work. So you got to see tangibly what looks right and what doesn't look right. What is acceptable and what's unacceptable. I also liked the fact that they gave a list of search engines that are available for you if you're looking for employment, but one of the things that I find a challenge is using some of those search engines and that you're not necessarily linked up with a Human Resources person, you're out there putting out your resume with thousands of other people and so sometimes you don't get the responses through the email, because the application doesn't always go to a particular person. So I found that to be a slight bit of a challenge for me.¹⁴

¹²Ibid.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Ibid.

Participants who attended the Presentation and Professionalism seminar and its emphasis on mentoring agreed that it is vital to have a career mentor. In fact, all participants indicated that they would recommend a career mentor to someone. However, participants were unlikely to have career mentors and desired to seek mentoring relationships. Reflecting on their own professional careers, two of the participants' opinions are shared here. Participant number one stated, "I never thought of myself as someone who needed to develop a mentor relationship and when I heard [the presenter] give her presentation, it was like the "ah ha" moment for me. ... If you're developing and trying to maneuver through a career, you really do need to have someone who has already been there, who knows the steps, which can groom you on all aspects of your career. ... I thought had I had a mentor during my career I might not have gotten myself caught in the situation that I am in," while participant number two had this to say, "[The workshop] offered practical advice. This is something I haven't considered..., but you know in this position for that I just recently applied, one of the things that really, really excited me was the first interview. The woman told me she had been mentored by the Sales Director and that she would in fact be a mentor to me."¹⁵

Post-seminar data suggested that while participants believe that physical image is an important factor associated with obtaining a job, it is more beneficial to provide concrete strategies to identifying dress and grooming needs on a low-income budget. Conversely, presentations focused on age-inappropriate instructions for dress and grooming that may be interpreted as demeaning and offensive. One participant said she liked the workshop and felt that people gave more respect to those who dressed in

¹⁵Ibid.

business attire. She plans to change her image in the future. Yet, another participant stated, "I did not like anything about the workshop. Business casual is not only the norm, but it's also the norm for interviewing."¹⁶

Outcome

In a follow-up that occurred six weeks after the Employment Marketability Model seminars, a one-on-one, face-to-face in-depth interview was held with each participant to provide an update on the strategies employed to increase their chances at obtaining a preferred job. Overall participants were moving successfully toward employment. For example, participant number one engaged a professional recruiter and subsequently was contacted for three interviews. At the time of this writing, she is in training for full time employment as a family counselor.

Participant number two also reported progress toward employment. Immediately following the seminars, she contacted a prospective career mentor and has taken steps toward developing a mentor-mentee relationship. She has also identified several job opportunities outside of her normal professional experiences. As such, she is employed with Student Support Services as a child assessor and has more recently taken on a second job as a temporary full-time classroom teacher. She is also motivated to begin work on creating her new non-profit organization focused on mentoring young mothers.

Participant number three reported a new perspective on her employment status. Her attitude concerning her unemployment tends to focus more on her long-term goal of obtaining a project management certificate. Currently she is enrolled in a certification

¹⁶Ibid.

program at a local university. Also, she is working on developing career mentor relationships and has secured part time employment.

Participant number four reported that she is no longer interested in seeking employment, but will be starting her own business as a fashion designer. This entrepreneurial spirit has directed her to a network of individuals engaged in helping her achieve this goal.

The hypothesis for An Employment Marketability Model for the Women of Metropolitan Baptist Church was achieved. Another follow-up with this group will take place in six months.

CHAPTER SIX

REFLECTION, SUMMARY, AND CONCLUSION

Reflection

The experience of this study has taught this researcher the importance of thinking through every step of the research design. When writing the abstract for her project the researcher had envisioned a single method of research for collecting data to complete her study. Once the researcher entered into the process of designing the model and reading of alternative methods of collecting information, she decided that the self-administered questionnaire would be the best method of data collection. The researcher realized that she needed to have first hand information about the problems confronting future participants before the construction of the self-administered questionnaire could be constructed. Thus, in order to gather this essential information, another research method was added, the focus group. Information gleaned from the focus group not only equipped the researcher with knowledge whereby she could construct a research instrument, but it was the guiding force behind the primary and sub-topics around which the seminars in the researcher's study evolved.

While the seminars presented as part of this study were generally well received by the study's participants, were the researcher to do this study again, the seminars would not be based solely on the analysis of data resulting from the focus group. The demographics of the study's participants would be considered before seminars were

finalized. The seminar entitled Presentation and Professionalism is an example of the need to take into consideration participant's demographics. This seminar was more appropriate for someone going into the workplace for the first time or for someone who lacked experience in a professional setting.

In the eyes of the researcher, a post-seminar questionnaire and its analyses would not satisfactorily bring closure to this study, but perhaps in-depth interviews would. This method was added to the design as a supplement that occurred six weeks after the last seminar was held. The study's participants were very reluctant to know that the study had ended and they look forward to assisting with An Employment Marketability Model for the Women of Metropolitan Baptist Church when it becomes a part of the church's Christian Discipleship Institute.

One of the fears the researcher faced when selecting participants for the study was that the participants would not honor their commitment to attend all seminars. At the close of the first seminar fear no longer existed. Participants were enthusiastic about the information they received. Each expressed that the presenters had spoken directly to her needs both spiritually and professionally. They were excited about returning the following Saturday.

Another fear of the researcher was that some unforeseeable circumstance would give cause for one of the presenters to cancel her seminar or send in a substitute. Nonetheless, every presenter not only was present, but stayed to support other presenters and gave one-on-one help to the study's participants.

Needless to say, the researcher learned as much about current employment trends and strategies as the study's participants. Having been out of the workforce for nearly

fifteen years, she was surprised to learn of the role technology has assumed in the employment industry and that in many instances the human touch has been replaced by a machine.

The importance of a competent team to assist with a research study cannot be overly emphasized. Collaborating organizations, study participants, and volunteers were essential to the successful management of this research study as each functioned in its lane of expertise. Of course, it was the researcher's responsibility to manage the team. A project timeline was designed in September 2009 that was invaluable in this regard. In consultation with the team, few modifications were made along the way and the project began and ended as scheduled (Appendix I). Many resources were made available to this study through the generosity of this team of partnering organizations and individuals.

Summary

When analyzed, information gathered from a focus group, self-administered questionnaires, and in-depth interviewing produced evidence that the Employment Marketability Model for the Women of Metropolitan Baptist Church had achieved the aim of the research. The researcher hypothesized that at the conclusion of the Employment Marketability Model participants who completed the seminars would report an increase in job interviews and job acquisitions.

Four seminars with sub-topics were conducted as the intervention phase of the study. They were Bible Study, Emotional Readiness, Reinventing One's Skills, and Presentation and Professionalism. All seminars were very helpful to the study's participants; however, since all study participants had professional backgrounds, the seminar on Presentation and Professionalism was least beneficial to them. Interestingly,

the participants applied strategies discussed in seminars to prepare for and go out on job interviews, but they felt very strongly that the sub-seminar on mentoring gave them new perspectives on how developing a mentor-mentee relationship can help with their personal, as well as their professional growth and development. The participants expressed that the seminar on Bible Study left an indelible imprint on their lives, and that they are now encouraging others to participate in a form of Bible study.

Pre-seminar, post-seminar, and interview data show that the Employment Marketability Model greatly influenced the study-participants' perceptions of, and experiences with their employment status. Overall participants were moving successfully toward employment.

Conclusion

From the inception of An Employment Marketability Model study, the researcher's goal was to design an employment model that would increase the possibility of women finding a job. This goal was achieved. This study on An Employment Marketability Model for the Women of Metropolitan Baptist Church is a significant project that may be adopted by any church. With the current state of the economy in the United States, many churches will find the model beneficial as they seek to address issues centering on unemployment and its effect on their parishioners. This study provides a useful model that allows churches to augment their existing Women's Ministry program, or use it as a first step to begin one.

APPENDIX A
FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

**AN EMPLOYMENT MARKETABILITY MODEL
FOR THE WOMEN OF METROPOLITAN BAPTIST CHURCH**

January 8, 2010

1. What conditions or circumstances do you attribute to your current employment status? (listening for micro and macro issues—race, gender, budgets or personality clashes, disputes, competition, etc).
2. What is *preventing* you from obtaining your preferred job? (listening for family issues, location, more training, education, networks etc).
3. Are you seeking to improve or re-invent your employment skills? Explain. (listening for *how* participant is making herself marketable).
4. Are you receiving any employment support services? If so, please describe. Are these supports or services effective? How so? If not, please explain. (listening for *what* are the *specific* supports/services and *how* are they benefiting the participant).
5. What do you feel will lead to *success* in getting your preferred job? (listening for the *specifics* of *personal and professional* factors).
6. Do you think spirituality has an impact on your dealing with your current employment status? If so, please explain. (listening for *how* participants define or describe *spirituality*).
7. How would you describe your “perfect” job? (listening for specifics on work tasks, work environment, hours, etc.).

APPENDIX B**SEMINAR SCHEDULE FOR AN EMPLOYMENT MARKETABILITY MODEL**

SEMINAR SCHEDULE FOR AN EMPLOYMENT MARKETABILITY MODEL

All seminars will be held on the third floor at Metropolitan Baptist Administrative Building at 96 Harry S. Truman Drive in Largo, MD. Phone 202 238-5000

MARCH 6	MARCH 13	MARCH 20	MAY 1
<i>Emotional Readiness</i>	<i>Reinventing One's Skills</i>	<i>Presentation and Professionalism</i>	
8:45 Refreshments	8:45 Refreshments	8:45 Refreshments	8:45 Refreshments
9:00 Warm-up Activity	9:00 Something to Share	9:00 Something to Share	
9:15 Pre-test	9:15 Devotion	9:15 Devotion	A post-test will be given to all participants, followed by a discussion.
9:35 Devotion	9:30 Bible Study with Rev. Annie Lanier	9:30 Bible Study with Rev. Arnette Georges	
9:50 Bible Study with Rev. Brenda Girton Mitchell	10:00 Workshop: <i>Reinventing One's Skills I</i> - Employment preferences and Learning new skills with Ms. Kimberly Lee	10:00 Workshop: <i>Presentation and Professionalism I</i> : Dress and grooming with Ms. Brenda J. Brooks Researching the job market with Ms. Yolanda Tully and Ms. Tanya Peters	Participants will receive employment support services from a professional who will be present for this session.
10:20 Workshop: <i>Emotional Readiness I</i> - Fear, Age and racial discrimination with Dr. Ayana Watkins-Northern	11:00 Snacks	11:00 Snacks	
11:25 Snacks	11:30 Workshop: <i>Reinventing One's Skills II</i> - Resume and cover letter writing, Interviewing skills with Ms. Yolanda Tully and Ms. Tanya Peters	11:30 Workshop: <i>Presentation and Professionalism II</i> - Researching the job market and job applications with Ms. Yolanda Tully and Ms. Tanya Peters Mentoring with Dr. Yolanda Gibbons	
11:50 Workshop: <i>Emotional Readiness II</i> - Conflict with managers and co-workers, Instant gratification with Dr. Kim Barnett			
12:50 Wrap-up and closing prayer	12:45-1:00 Wrap-up and closing prayer	12:45-1:00 Wrap-up and closing prayer	

APPENDIX C**LETTER OF INVITATION TO SEMINAR PRESENTERS**

ELIZABETH H. HICKS
 2807 WESTBROOK LANE . MITCHELLVILLE, MARYLAND 20721
 301-249-7880 · ehicks1011@aol.com

February 13, 2010

Dear _____:

Currently I am enrolled in a doctoral program at United Theological Seminary in Dayton, Ohio. I am writing a thesis entitled *Collaborative Leadership: An Employment Marketability Model for the Women of Metropolitan Baptist Church*. As the title suggests, I may include other organizations, agencies, and persons in the collection of research information that supports the successful completion of my project leading to a Doctor of Ministry degree.

On January 8, 2010 I conducted a focus group that provided me with information that will be used to conduct workshops on Employment Marketability.

(_____(NAME)_____), I wish to request your assistance as I enter into the field research phase of my project. Specifically, I would like for you to conduct a Bible study class for one of several workshops that will take place on March 6, 13, and 20, 2010. The purpose of these workshops is the collection of data for my thesis as well as helping women learn skills that will benefit them as they search for employment. Beginning the morning with Bible study is an excellent way of preparing the women spiritually for what is to come in the workshops.

The Bible study that I would like for you to conduct will take place on March 6, 2010 at 9:50 until 10:20 AM.

The Bible study and workshops will take place on the third floor at 96 Harry S. Truman Drive in Largo, MD. The schedule for the day will begin at 9:00 AM and conclude at 1:00 PM. It will not be necessary for you to be present for the entire four hours, but only for the time your presentation is scheduled. Please see the enclosed schedule.

Thank you for saying yes to this invitation as it will help me greatly with the completion of my work and benefit the lives of our participants.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Harrison Hicks

APPENDIX D**LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS FOR ONE-ON-ONE INTERVIEW**

ELIZABETH H. HICKS
 2807 WESTBROOK LANE
 BOWIE, MARYLAND 20721
 301-249-7880

April 26, 2010

Dear _____,

I hope you have had a good few weeks since we last met as a group and that some positive things have occurred in your lives.

This letter comes as a reminder that we are to have our last session this Saturday, May 1, 2010 in Largo, MD. We will meet in the room where we usually meet. You will take your post test and I will interview each of you individually. My time with each of you will take approximately 30 minutes, therefore I am assigning each of you an arrival time.

_____ 9:15 _____ 9:50am _____ 10:25am _____ 11:00am

I would like to tape record the interviews for accuracy of information that will be included in my dissertation. Fictional names will be used in the dissertation in place of your names should I use a name at all. I will bring a release for you to sign. I hope each of you will agree to that.

Please be prepared to share lots of specific information focusing on the workshops and Bible studies as they are the areas from which the interview questions will be developed.

Employment professionals will be on site from 9:30am to 11:00 am to discuss specific employment concerns you may have. Please plan to do this before or after your scheduled interview. You will receive a stipend after your interview.

I cannot thank you enough for your loyalty to the process of assisting me in the educational journey that I have undertaken, To God we give the glory.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Hicks

P.S. I encourage you to review your materials from the workshops to refresh your memory.

APPENDIX E
STUDY PARTICIPANTS NEEDED

STUDY PARTICIPANTS NEEDED

A doctoral candidate is looking for women eighteen years or older to participate in a study on An Employment Marketability Model for Women. Four workshops will be conducted on March 6, 13, 20, and May 1, 2010 on Bible Study, Emotional Readiness for the Workplace, Reinventing One's Skills, and Presentation and Professionalism.

Women selected to participate in the study must participate in ALL workshops. Those unemployed, looking to enter the workplace for the first time, or transitioning will qualify for the study. Please call Elizabeth Hicks at 301 249-7880 between 3:00 and 8:00 PM Monday through Friday.

APPENDIX F**PRE-SEMINAR, POST-SEMINAR QUESTIONNAIRE**

PRE-SEMINAR, POST-SEMINAR, QUESTIONNAIRE

Collaborative Leadership: An Employment Marketability Model Survey

United Theological Seminary
Elizabeth Harrison Hicks, Doctoral Candidate

Thank you for participating in this important survey focused on assessing women's perceptions of, and experiences with employment marketability. Please read carefully each question and provide honest responses. It is important not to skip any questions. Your responses are important because they will provide comparison data for evaluating the effectiveness of the Employment Marketability Model. *All responses will be reported as aggregate data and are anonymous and confidential.*

1. I set aside time for *daily* devotionals, prayers and meditation.

Yes
No
Sometimes

2. To what degree does your spirituality impact your feelings about your current employment status?

Not at all
Somewhat
Very Much

3. Do you encourage others to participate in daily devotionals, prayers and meditations?

Yes
No
Sometimes

4. How would you rate your level of fear concerning your current employment status?

None 1
Very Little
Very Much

5. If you tend to experience fear, Explain

6. Are you aware of practices or procedures that address age and/or racial discrimination in the workplace?

Yes
No
Somewhat

7. Are you aware of practices or procedures that address conflict in the workplace?

Yes
No
Somewhat

8. Are you likely to utilize practices or procedures that address conflict in the workplace?
- Yes No Sometimes
9. Do you think that it is possible to reinvent yourself and your skills for the workplace?
- Yes No Somewhat
10. Have you considered enrolling in any continuing education courses or certificate programs?
- Yes No Somewhat
11. Have you considered changing career fields or starting your own business?
- Yes No Somewhat
12. Have you sought any specialized service that assists with resume and cover letter writing?
- Yes No
13. Have you researched the do's and don'ts of how to complete the application for the job for which you are applying?
- Yes No
14. If you are not the successful candidate for a job, do you ask for feedback on your application materials or the interview process?
- Yes No Sometimes
15. Have you attended any job fairs or used any job search/placement services?
- Yes No Sometimes
16. If the answer to the above question is "NO," Explain.
17. To what degree do you think appearance contributes to one's success in obtaining a job?
- Not at all A Little Very Much

APPENDIX G

In-depth Interview Protocol

In-depth Interview Protocol

Participants Perceptions of the Influence of the Employment Marketability Model On Increasing Job Opportunity

Having participated in the Employment Marketability Model, I'd like to know your honest perceptions of how each workshop has impacted or improved your chances at getting a job. I need your honest thinking that includes challenges and issues related to you seeking employment.

Let's begin.....

What did you like *best* about the workshop that focused on (Emotional Readiness [Conflict with Managers and Co-workers, Instant Gratification; Age Discrimination, Racial Discrimination, Fear])— (Reinventing One's Skills [Employment Preferences, Learning New Skills, Cover Letters and Resume Writing])— (Presentation and Professionalism [Dress and Grooming, Researching the Job Market and Job Applications, Mentoring]) What did you like *least* about it?

Was there a workshop that addressed a particular need you had? Explain!

Thinking back on the workshops we had, can you tell me *specifically* how these workshops impacted your job search and its process? What *issues* or *challenges* have been associated with your job search and its process that you think was addressed or even emphasized in the workshops?

What issues or challenges were not addressed in the workshops?

Let's turn to the Bible Devotions.....

Was there a particular way in which the Bible Devotions helped you as you prepared to search for a job? Can you please provide examples? In general were they helpful in your spiritual journey or how you look at life as a whole? Please explain.

Do you think that this project would benefit other women in the church? Why or why not?

APPENDIX H
RELEASE FORM

Elizabeth H. Hicks
2807 Westbrook Land
Mitchellville, MD 20721
301 249-7889

May 1, 2010

RELEASE FORM

I, _____, grant permission for Elizabeth Harrison Hicks to record an interview with me on *An Employment Marketability Model for the Women of Metropolitan Baptist Church* on Saturday, May 1, 2010.

APPENDIX I**PROJECT TIMELINE**

PROJECT TIMELINE

AN EMPLOYMENT MARKETABILITY MODEL FOR THE WOMEN OF METROPOLITAN BAPTIST CHURCH

2009	
October 31	Invite to participate in study: Metropolitan Community Development Corporation, Garment's Hem, and Enterprise Solutions, Inc.
November 14	Conceptualization of research project meeting with collaborating organizations
December 5	Sample selection and recruitment
December 19	Confirm target sample
December 21	Confirm focus group date and establish protocol
2010	
January 8	Conduct focus group
January 14	Analyze focus group data and solicit feedback
January 23	Meet with collaborating organizations to set objectives and action steps
January 27	Invite workshop facilitators and guest speakers to participate in study
January 29	Design pre-test-post-test instrument
February 17	Plan workshops with facilitators and guest speakers
March 6, 13, 20	Randomly assign experimental and control groups, administer pre test, and implement employment marketability model
May 1	Solicit feedback, administer post-test, and give out honorarium
June 9	Analyze data and write results from pre-test-post-test

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